

BODY COUNT

"I was once
told by a man in
a subway station that I
should be turned into a vending
machine. That way people could put in
their money and get out a small piece of me
whenever they wanted. This book is as close
as I'll ever come to fulfilling that man's fantasy.
I'm twenty-seven and I still feel as innocent as when
the body count started. I stopped counting long ago,
but I still believe the next one will really love me. I'm
still surprised when someone says 'Later for you, honey.'

Every man I ever loved got something
different from me. Push this button for wifely allegiance,
that one for an exotic whore, that one for a pal. I've been a
little of each I suppose.

Body Count is whole raw truth, so it's unlikely that
any two people will have the same reaction to it. A lot
of men will say, 'That chick sure picks bastards. I'm
nothing like *them*.' Women are likely to gobble
up the Paul McCartney chapter and then say,

'Boy is *she* a groupie.'

All I ask is that you not understand it
too quickly."

—Francie Schwartz

Body Count
by Francie Schwartz

BODY COUNT

\$3.00



Francie
Schwartz

BODY COUNT

Francie Schwartz



Copyright © 1972 by
Francie Schwartz

All rights reserved, including
the right to reproduce this
book or portions thereof in
any form.

Library of Congress Catalog
Card Number: 72/79026
SBN: 0/87932/029/X

First Printing

Straight Arrow Books
625 Third Street
San Francisco, California 94107

Distributed by Quick Fox
33 West 60th Street
New York 10023

Printed in the United States
of America by

Cover photograph:
Annie Leibovitz

for
**Norman
Mailer**





1. But how does the sperm get
to the egg?
2. Wait to see if it's a sure
thing, Honey.
3. Don't think of me as someone
on the horizon.
4. Just remember who's number
one, Baby.
5. You're accepted, you're
accepted!
6. I'm easy to please, but hard
to satisfy.
7. The doctor is a shitkicker.
8. Don't cry, I'm a cunt.
9. All we ever do together is
smoke and fuck.
10. Didn't you go with Paul
McCartney?
11. Rolling Stone.
12. All I ask is that you not
understand me too quickly.

Epilogue: For Norman Mailer.

Preface.

I

WAS ONCE TOLD by a man in a subway station that I should be turned into a vending machine. That way people could put in their money and get out a small piece of me whenever they wanted. This book is probably the closest I will ever come to realizing that man's fantasy.

I'm twenty-seven and I still feel as innocent as when the body count started. I stopped counting long ago, but I still believe the next one will really love me. I'm still surprised when someone says 'Later for you, honey.'

Every man I ever loved got something different from me. Push this button for wifely allegiance, that one for an exotic whore, that one for a pal. I've been a little of each I suppose.

Body Count is whole raw truth, so it's unlikely that any two people will have the same reaction to it. A lot of men will say, 'That chick sure picks bastards. I'm *nothing* like *them*.' Women are likely to gobble up the Paul McCartney chapter and then say, 'Boy is *she* a groupie.'

All I ask is that you not understand it too quickly.



1. But how does the sperm get to the egg?



WHEN I WAS TWELVE, people started asking me what I wanted to be when I grew up. My answer was, "A woman", and it still is. My definition keeps changing but it has always been complicated.

Just before I was born, in the summer of 1944, I began to like Frank Sinatra. My mother told me I used to turn somersaults in her womb every time

she played one of his records.

Once in the open, I began to expand my range, but Sinatra wasn't a bad place to start.

My mother was five-two, had blue eyes and a black pompadour. She was born under Aries in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

To be with my father, though, she would go *anywhere*, even Greensboro, North Carolina. He was stationed there as a flight instructor in the Air Force. Later on it was Madison, Wisconsin and other bases I don't remember.

My mother followed wherever strong, reticent Jack could be found, and took me along.

I remember him marching, iron-jawed, in formation. At work he was so strong and at home so much fun. It was the primal love affair.

It began for real the morning I got the only spanking of my childhood. I must have been five or six.

I had committed the unpardonable sin of waking my parents up on Sunday morning. As I stood at the door to their bedroom I saw my father, a giant, asleep beside my mother. The morning light made his skin look pink. I stood in the doorway staring at something I had never seen before. "It's so complicated," I thought. I couldn't see too well but I was fascinated by my discovery and ran to get my sister, Harrie.

It took a long time to wake her up and by the time we got back, Daddy had turned his back to the door and was growling angrily. Later I got my spanking, but I didn't mind. I had seen *It*. I knew what it was. A penis, right? A penis within a set of other magical things. No matter what other names I'd hear it called later, nothing could shatter my enthusiasm at age six. If



swers to all the man-woman questions and my mother wasn't going to give them. Sure, she took me to a stupid film about menstruation, and as we walked to the car, I asked her, "Mommy, I understand everything in the movie except HOW DOES THE SPERM GET TO THE EGG?" There was a gulp and a long pause.

"Well, darling, if the mommy and the daddy love each other very much, they sleep very, very close together . . ."

"You mean the sperm jumps out of the penis and crawls into the vagina?"

"Well, not exactly . . . you'll find out when you fall in love." My father was not to be approached on the subject.

Together with a friend I got hold of some 'dirty' books and we pored over them searching for straight answers. *From Here to Eternity* came close, but was too vague. *Ulysses* was far too long and hard to understand. *The Naked and the Dead* sounded dirty when you thought about it, but that wasn't much help. *Peyton Place* provided what we wanted. Under the bed with flashlights we giggled through the "good" pages until at last we had it figured out. The funniest thing was why grown-ups made such a fuss about it. Mom, Dad, what was the big deal anyway?

It wasn't until religious school that I started thinking about my parents seriously and trying to analyze their relationship. Every night, after dinner, they would settle in front of the TV set, my father in his overstuffed chair, my mother curled in one corner of the couch. At eleven they would head for the bedroom, where I assumed they would go right to sleep, so they could get up and do the same thing over again.

Their marriage seemed so well-balanced, and my father was always telling me, "If you grow up to be *half* the woman your mother is, you'll make someone a *great* wife." My mother did the housework and read occasionally, mostly about cooking and decorating. What was so tough about that, I used to wonder. My father didn't raise his voice to her more than three times in ten years. What was the problem?

They may not have had any problem, but if your parents are crazy about each other for long enough, you will grow up expecting the same total security, and believing that anything but a happy marriage must be an illness of some kind.

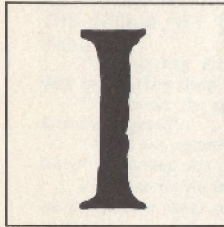
The first sexy feelings I had, somewhere in West Los Angeles during the summer of 1956, were movie-like fantasies of being kissed and caressed in full moonlight.

I dreamed of the boy at school who carried my books. He was kissing me passionately, and proposing to me. I dreamed I was with a strong man with hair on his chest and big muscles,

who treated me like a goddess. I met him during the summer just before my thirteenth birthday. My husband.



2. Wait to see if it's a sure thing, Honey.



I WAS SITTING WITH a girlfriend neighbor in the recreation hall of the temple after a confirmation service, and when he walked in, though he was a good fifty feet away, I couldn't help staring. He was tall and lean, with olive brown skin and almond shaped eyes like an Arab prince.

"Who's that?" I whispered.

"Forget it, kid," replied Barbie.

"That's Leon, and he's a *playboy*, and he's too old for you and you'll never get him anyway." I straightened up and leaning close to her ear said, "I've got news for you. I'm going to *marry* him."

She looked at me as if I were crazy and then shrugged, "Get outta my nose."

I watched him move through the crowd of kids, winking and flirting. He was obviously very popular with the girls. He danced close with a couple of them, and they both had the same starry-eyed look that you see in teenage movies and *Seventeen* magazine. It was disgusting. I wanted to run away to my room to plan my attack.

I knew that part of the secret of getting a boy to like you involved pretending you weren't interested. I also knew you had to wear mascara and not have any pimples. I wrote down clever things to say. I schemed. I was as patient as a nun. I even wrote his name in neat columns on notebook paper until I'd written it ten thousand times.

The problem was he was in an older group at the Temple, so I needed a liaison, and Barbie did fine, telling him hello from me every week for three months. Once I got to speak with him on the phone, but he didn't remember who I was. Shit! I wanted to cry.

We met finally at a Temple "youth group" party. I had spent an hour putting on eyeliner, mascara and lipstick. I wore all white, and glistened with anticipation. We danced together and afterwards he drove me home, saying, "See you next week."

We began to date, once a week. Very quickly he taught me how to kiss and we became a couple. I gave him a gold I.D. bracelet for his sixteenth birthday, and had it engraved with our

secret expression: "G-R-R-R-R."

On the 4th of July we doubled with his best friend and the girl who had been chasing him until I got him. We became friends and made a foursome. Drive-in movies, beach parties, making out in the hills. Leon and Francie and Bill and Judy. Without pot or booze or much money we managed to have fun.

Marriage seemed so natural. I don't think I can remember him asking me formally; it was understood. We decided to wait until we were married before going "all the way" but what we did while we waited didn't satisfy either of us. We'd sit in the car, parked near my parent's house, rolling back and forth over each other. I would not be content giving less than he, so each time his strong brown hands came a little closer to the ultimate destination in some untouched zone, I'd let go just a little more.

We wanted to "go all the way" but we couldn't get married, so we decided to sanctify the act with a ceremony of our own.

We married ourselves, soberly and intensely, one night in February on a beach at the L.A. County Line. We drove in silence, a Bible and a prayer book lying between us on the seat. Tucked inside the Holy Book was a contract Leon had composed himself, with my approval, and a cigar band to be used as the ring.

When we arrived we climbed down the rocky cliff to the beach and laid out our ritual objects of love. We recited the words of the contract and the sensual verses of Solomon. We lay down together, closer than before, more to keep warm than for passion's sake, touching the tears on each other's cheeks.

"My wife," Leon sighed to me.

"My husband," I replied, loving the sound of it, and loving him with fierce intensity.

There was nothing more to say, and we walked slowly back to the car, puzzled at our own seriousness.

We wanted to sleep in each other's arms and wake next to each other. That was impossible, of course, because he had to get back to his parents' house and I had to get back to mine. So the moment we had been waiting for didn't actually arrive until months later in the summer. My mother and father were sleeping in their part of the house, and Leon and I were left alone.

His skin felt warm from the beach sun.

"I want to touch you all over. Can we?"

"I'm afraid."

"I am too," I admitted, "but I want you so much I'll go mad if I can't feel all of you next to me."

"Please be careful."

There was only a sigh when I pressed my body next to his, and the electricity of skin touching skin for the first time. My belly felt the pressure of his enormous erection and my breasts swelled against the strength of his chest. I had to touch more of him, so without prompting, I moved closer and guided his virgin penis between my thighs. Before either of us could stop we were in a different realm: I gave my love a cherry in about thirty seconds.

It was the most gorgeous feeling I could imagine, having my insides full of that strength, even if it was for less than a minute.

We hardly had time to talk about it, because both of us were worried about staining my mother's new couch. We ran to the kitchen for a dishtowel and some soap and hurried back looking for the tiny red rose.

While we were cleaning up I had jumped into my panties and they too were stained, so we put them in a paper sack for him to throw out on his way home.

Six months before we were legally married, Leon told me I wasn't satisfying him. I was terrified of losing him and this was my first reminder that the world is run by the ones with penises. Hadn't I "gone all the way"?

We took Tuesday afternoons off from school for fucking, although I insisted that we call it making love. It was in his mother's musty old beach house in Santa Monica.

After the first time, Leon lay with his face turned away from me, staring out at the window. I panicked, thinking I had failed to satisfy him again, and whispered, "Forget the rubbers this time," caressing him until he was bigger and harder than ever before. He thrust into me silently and with determination, until finally we forgot where each left off and the other began.

We conceived a child, and both of us knew it. I felt flooded and alive, my womb bathed in his potent life. Neither of us dared speak about it until much later, when it began to screw up our plans. All I knew is that I had given him what he wanted, regardless of my own future.

I had just graduated from high school when my breasts began to show the first signs of pregnancy. I wanted to learn a profession and started art courses at the Chouinard Institute in February, 1962.

That was the dream-like year when we all felt protected by a gorgeous President who was as handsome as a movie star. There didn't seem to be any reason why everything should not turn out all right.

Leon had been at the school for two years and had been

awarded a working scholarship, which meant he spent extra hours designing and mounting exhibitions for the school's tiny lobby. The guy who'd won it the year before had broken up with his wife because he was never home.

The first thing that Leon said when I hinted that I might be pregnant was, "I've got to refuse the scholarship."

"Please wait and see if it's a sure thing, honey. It might just be a late period. You know how irregular I am and my mother had two miscarriages when she was young."

"But if I accept and then you have the baby, I'll have to drop out and get a night job. *Then* how would the school feel about me? They would never take me back again."

"Look, if I'm going to have a baby, that doesn't mean you have to screw up your education. I can drop out, and work now, and save up some money, and then . . ."

"No, Francie, you aren't going to work. You're going to be my wife, and have my children, and that's all that matters. I'll figure something out. But I can't take the scholarship. You know what happened to Jim and his wife last year. I can't take that chance."

"Dummy, it's not going to happen to us. I love you."

"I love you, too, but please don't think about taking a job. You should stay in school as long as possible. Just don't take sculpture or anything heavy like that."

I was getting angry. "I don't even know for sure I'm pregnant! Look, we'll go to the doctor next week. The wedding is only two months away. Let me worry about it, and you just take that scholarship. You're not dropping out, and that's that."

"We'll see."

We did see. The doctor made Leon and my mother wait outside, while he draped a sheet over my knees and stuck two rubber-gloved fingers up my vagina. He felt the cervix, soft and enlarged, and without hesitation said, "Yup, for sure."

I had to be alone for a few minutes to cry by myself, and so the doctor left me with my feet in the stirrups to wonder what was going to happen. I was pregnant after all. I would never finish college, never become anybody important. I'd end up just like my mother, cleaning the house all day. I'd be subjugating myself to a husband who would never understand what I'd given up.

When Leon came into the room and kissed my belly, things seemed better. I felt fulfilled and pleased with myself. My mother reeked with understanding, even though she was crying.

I knew I couldn't tell my father, but I hadn't expected the reaction of Leon's parents. It was out of a soap opera. They were

sitting in their strange living room when we arrived to see them, looking haggard but straining to look relaxed. They kissed and hugged me and I could see that Leon's mother was ready to cry at the slightest opportunity. She wanted us to have a "quiet little civil ceremony," on account of the child.

"You have to think of the boy," her husband added.

When I said I still wanted a wedding I'd dreamed of for three years, his mother broke down and shouted, "No, you can't do this to us. The shame . . ."

Leon looked at me, totally helpless. He said nothing. As far as his parents were concerned he had absolutely no guts.

"Let's get out of here, Leon," I said, and he got up and followed me silently out. I felt like hitting him.

The whole fight was absurd, and useless, because a few weeks later the baby died. My father sat beside me on the bed as I lay there in pain, bleeding onto the sheets. "Maybe it's good that this is happening. You've learned a lesson," he said. There was no time to figure out that statement, because I was screaming in pain.

I was driven to the hospital where a doctor knocked me out. When I awoke, filled with sterile packing, I felt emptier than I had ever felt in my life. They said it would have been a little boy. I wondered whether I hadn't secretly wished to lose him, so I could get back my independence, my education, my youth.

The woman in the bed next to mine was in to have her fourth child. She looked at me with a leer.

"You ever lost a kid before, honey?"

"No, this is the first."

"I bet you're not even married. Hell, you'll have another. Don't worry."

"I'm not."

I was feeling totally wasted by the loss of the baby and she was reassuring me that I'd have another. I never wanted to fuck again. I wanted to be little and pure and free.

Leon and his parents filed through the room, expressed their sympathies and regrets, and showered me with flowers and apologies for the upset they had created. They felt guilty, I suppose. But I didn't care. As the days went by, and I looked forward to my flat tummy coming back, and my white-veiled wedding, I smirked inwardly at the thought of my restored freedom. And I began to doubt my husband-to-be. I didn't want to be a housewife, and he wanted nothing more of me.

The wedding was charming, middle-class and Jewish. We were given hundreds of gifts.

I remember noticing through my triple veil that my father was crying and that my mother wasn't.

We spent two days honeymooning in San Francisco. At night we made love, trying to get back the freshness that had gone with the baby. All we could celebrate was that at last, we were *sleeping* together, and the magic of that wore off when we returned to L.A. for summer school.

At school I felt older and wiser. Chouinard was definitely funky. It had a WPA facade, paint spattered floors and four hundred students up to their elbows in paint, plaster or charcoal. I loved every minute. In the morning I studied Dada, Expressionism, the Renaissance, the Archaic Greek snake goddesses. We studied Nietzsche, Marx, Plato and Sartre in philosophy, Shaw and Shakespeare in literature. At lunch we used to play bridge on the patio, do research in the tiny library and bitch about the grading system. There were no fraternities, no athletics and no political groups. Just the free exploration of creativity in all its exhilarating forms. Everything was very loose.

Leon was busy with his work and I soon discovered the surprising truth about him: he was pretty dull. He didn't see many people, but he didn't seem to mind whether or not I did. He still thought I was the little girl he'd picked up in the Temple Youth Group.

Then something political happened, and I found myself on the opposite side from my husband. The Board of Trustees at Chouinard, backed by the Disney Foundation, had fired a "radical" drawing and print instructor. The man had been busted by the police for a La Cienega exhibit of erotic drawings of his Japanese wife, and now he'd been victimized at the school.

He didn't fit in with the Disney plan for a new super-art-university in the hills outside of L.A. They didn't want to spoil the image they were planning to create with their millions. They began to cut down hard on the variety of departments at the school. There would be no Advertising or Illustration or Fashion or Design at their superschool.

They wanted the school to produce chic art-gallery bullshit. I demonstrated in the lobby with a bunch of students protesting the policy and the firings. We sat on the floor and drew until CBS News showed up, and then debated angrily with the administrators.

Leon thought I was absurd to sign the petitions and go to the meetings. He was totally absorbed in the Design Lab and the working scholarship.

Nights at home, I'd cook dinner, do dishes, nap, then work

until midnight while he slept on the balcony he'd built. We'd moved out of a tiny apartment in the hills and were living in a store. It was an immense womb, with a tiny window in front, and a frosted one in back. He'd put in plumbing and straw matting on the floor, and we had the furniture my parents had given us when they moved back to Allentown. My father's transfer meant more money for the whole family, and gave my sister, Harrie, a chance to start college and become the center of attention for a change.

I was suddenly alone, living two lives, one for my husband, one for myself. I found myself wondering if it had ever been this way for my mother.

I suppose part of the reason it was so bad at home was that Leon refused to talk about anything controversial. Even politics.

If I was under pressure, he'd show me his answer and expect me to accept it blindly. If I disputed the peaceful surface of our life, he'd go for a long walk, not returning until I was too exhausted to even try to talk, much less fight.

His answer to the problem was simple and obscene. "Let's make love every night for the next month," he said, as if he were prescribing a pill.

"Are you serious? Do you think that's going to solve our problem?"

"It's better than fighting. Non-verbal communication is better."

I was furious and insulted. "No, you're wrong. I need to talk things out, even if we fight. We can't cover it up with orgasms. It's not going to work, and I think it's phony."

He went for a walk.

He complained about my cooking.

He complained that I didn't call his mother enough.

He complained that he didn't like my father's advice about insurance.

He complained that I resented him helping me with my design homework.

He was going sour, and I didn't care. There had to be something better than this drudgery.

I gave a party, and he hated every minute of it.

I learned to play chess, and he wouldn't play with me.

I tried to get along with his mother, but every time she came over, she brought sickening bags of Jewish food, and kept commenting how thin her son looked.

How could I let him cover his beautiful chin with that beard? Didn't I realize he was beginning to look like a beatnik?

I didn't know what to do. Was it my fault? Was I supposed

to stop growing, stop exploring for my husband's sake? Was I wrong to care more about my work than whether or not dinner was the way Leon wanted it?

I began looking for an escape.



3. Don't think of me as someone on the horizon.

M

ARVIN HEADED THE Advertising Lab at Chouinard. He was short but strong and square-set like a soldier at attention. He had the longest eyelashes I had ever seen.

Leon was helping to organize an advertising show at the school and one weekend Marvin invited us both up to his "cave" in the hills above the city.

This weekend retreat was literally a cave which had been converted by religious freaks. They had fingered homilies in wet cement at the foot of trees, saying things like, "Work plus love equals God." They had also installed two-way mirrors in the bathrooms.

Khrishna Venta, one of the many self-proclaimed messiahs of Southern California, had ruled his cult from there before burning himself to death one moonlit night.

Marvin wanted to fix the place up but his wife wouldn't seem to let him do it the way he really wanted. He struck me as such a sorrowful man.

The day Leon and I spent there left me feeling blue and empty. He and Marvin whitewashed a wall and I played with a small boy and a donkey called Shirley. I had feelings for Marvin that day that I knew would eventually threaten my fledgling marriage. I met him again, without Leon, and we went for a long drive during which he told me how unhappy he really was.

When he was nine his parents had told him he was the result of an unsuccessful abortion. When he was seventeen he had joined the Army and become a VD officer in Germany. All the time he was there, he said, he had gotten laid exactly once. He met his wife after his discharge at a Temple Youth Group and she told him she was pregnant soon after she had seduced him. They got married and even when he discovered she wasn't pregnant at all, he couldn't bring himself to leave her. He just stayed married to her, though she made him feel like a pervert, and wouldn't make love with the lights on. I held him in my arms and heard him whisper, "My God," as if he had never been touched by an attractive woman before.

As soon as I got home I told Leon the whole story. His response was to say, "If you decide to sleep with Marvin, don't

tell me about it, okay?"

I wanted him to grab me and bellow, "You're my wife!" But he didn't.

Next time Leon had a class and I was free, I drove to Glendale and found Marvin, sweaty and happy, waiting at a motel.

After we had made it together, I lay there thinking that it would never be the same. This was the second. Number two, number three . . . number forty. The beginning of the body count. The bodies that would pass through my life without touching my soul.

Marvin and I met every week, though Leon pretended not to know. On the afternoons I had been with Marvin, Leon would come home and make love to me with a sick new intensity.

When the High Holy days rolled around, my nerves were all exposed. Standing in the stuffy synagogue listening to the rabbi, I wanted toretch. He was making the annual pitch: "If you wanna talk to God, you gotta put something in the coinbox." The mink stoles and shiny suits sat quietly, taking it all in. By the time we got home, I realized that I wasn't going back there again. I kept Leon from sleeping.

"I want a separation. I want to take a little apartment for a month and think everything out."

"Why?"

"Because I don't know what's happening any more. I can't talk to you." He got up and dressed angrily. He threw the checkbook in my face and stomped down the stairs.

"Where're you going?"

"Out."

"Are you coming back?"

"No. No!"

The door slammed.

Marvin, in the meantime, had moved out of his house, into a cheap hotel in Hollywood. I called him, told him Leon had walked out, and drove there immediately to see him.

Marvin wasn't any help. Anyway, he said I shouldn't think of him as someone on the horizon. He said he was "a hopeless case."

In the morning, I drove home, and found my brother-in-law waiting in his little black VW. He followed me inside and proceeded to grill me for the whole story. He told me about his rotten marriage. His wife was frigid, but that didn't stop him. He had her in therapy.

At five o'clock, my husband called. He was at the beach.

"If you want to stay married to me, come and get me," he sobbed.

My brother-in-law sat across the room, smiling. He was obviously pleased in his role.

"You owe it to everyone to give your marriage a chance. We all love you both. Don't let us down. Don't let Leon down."

His words meant nothing to me, but I had just spoken to my husband and felt unbearably guilty. I knew Marvin had expected to lose me. I called him right there in front of my brother-in-law. I was giving in to guilt and conditioning. I told him I was going to try to make it work with Leon.

I drove to Venice, and found Leon in tears. He buried his head in my breast and cried.

We did try but he still wanted me to be a Jewish-brood-mare-cook-laundress. I had had it, and in October I told him I wanted a divorce.

"But I love you. You love me!"

"Yes, I love you, but you'll be much happier without me. I'll never be the kind of wife you need. I'm too independent."

"Please don't." He fell on his knees, and he put his arms around me. He tried to hold me, but I broke away. I grabbed the phone.

"Who are you calling?"

"You know."

He smashed his fist into the refrigerator, and threw a coffee mug against the wall. I grew very calm. He was a child.

I packed some clothes and left. I remember him, standing helplessly on the street, holding our cat, growing smaller and smaller in the rearview mirror.

Marvin got me a motel room, so I could think, after giving me his usual speech about how unreliable he was. I called my parents. My father was shocked, but my mother had seen it coming. I also called Leon to tell him I was alone and all right. After almost five years, it was finally over.

I took an apartment in Silverlake soon afterwards. I loved living alone. Leon sent me passionate, angry love letters, begging me to come home and have his children. He was totally crushed by what had happened.

There was still our property to be divided up, so I saw Leon again shortly afterwards. The day he was supposed to give me the pink slip for the car was the day of President Kennedy's assassination. I drove to the school to collect the slip. Everyone was standing around, stunned at the news. I ran to embrace my friend, Kathy, and we both burst into tears. She drove with me to the Design Lab and Leon came over to us looking pale. He stuck his head in the car to kiss the tears from my cheeks.

We all drove to my place to talk over dividing the property.

It was nasty for both of us. He got hysterical.

"How can you talk about property on a day like this? OUR PRESIDENT IS DEAD, AND YOU'RE TRYING TO TAKE ME FOR EVERYTHING I'M WORTH!"

"Don't be ridiculous," I told him. "My mother gave us that car. I need it. Give me the pink slip, and then get out. You're ridiculous."

He signed it angrily, and stormed out. Kathy and I decided to go to a movie to take the assassination off our minds. The movie was *One, Two, Three*, and the theater was packed with people with the same idea. There was a line in the film that dropped everybody's guts. At one point Pamela Tiffin says to Jimmy Cagney, "You'll love him, Daddy. He looks just like Jack Kennedy!" At that point, Kathy ran for the john.

Kathy came back from the ladies room saying she'd thrown up and wanted to go home. Back at the apartment she continued to throw up for hours. I called her Arab fiancé to tell him what had happened.

Marvin picked me up later and when we passed a donut place, he said, "How about some donuts and coffee?" I suddenly felt nauseous. I just made it to his ramshackle studio and into the bathroom. I sat on the floor, my head in the toilet. When I finally climbed into his bed, he said, "I was watching you. You were beautiful. Like a ballerina."

He must love me, I thought.

In the morning we returned to my place and found the TV on with preparations for the funeral. I still felt horrid, but got some medicine and rested. That day was the turning point. I'd lost the feeling that everything was going to be all right.

It was around then I started group therapy. My shrink was a resident at L.A. County General, and for two dollars a session he tried to convince me that I hated men and that Marvin and I had a sado-masochistic relationship. I didn't believe him for a minute, but it was something to do in my spare time.

The other people in the group were mostly poor, with miserable marriages and drinking problems. Each week they took turns putting someone in the "hot seat" and the shrink took it easy. I wanted to sort out what I felt about my coming divorce from Leon. Marvin wasn't sure whether he was responsible or not. I knew I felt guilty. Leon had a girl friend who wouldn't let him talk to me, even when we had to figure out our tax returns.

While preparing for the divorce I made my first discovery of executive lechery. The lawyer called me one evening and asked me to come up to his office to sign some papers. He ended up ripping the buttons off my blouse, telling me his wife was

pregnant, and that he needed me. Bullshit!

Watching him frantically jerk himself off on the rug, I thought, *Finish up yourself, creep*, and ran out of his office onto Sunset Strip.

When the divorce was heard I recited the lines my lawyer had fed me, signed the papers, and declared I wanted no alimony or property settlement. I figured Leon had no money, and we had already divided up the stuff. I hated lying about how Leon made me "nervous and upset." My Aunt Sylvia was my corroborating witness.

Leon's lawyer sat in the old dirty courtroom, looking sour, alert to any deviations from the script. After the divorce, I thought *if that could happen, anything could*. From there on, it was going to be all my own decisions. I could see that Marvin was really a mess. He was in therapy, I was in therapy, his wife and my ex-husband were in therapy. I still loved him, though. Marvin and I even looked for houses to rent. But we never got one. I was tired. And one afternoon, driving to his house, I wished I could revive the intense feelings I had once had for him. I wanted to start over and couldn't.

In 1964, I moved into a groovy little house with a high ceiling and a fireplace, downtown. It was surrounded by sixty-foot pines. An artist and his brother lived in the other half. We shared dinner, and I balled the older brother occasionally. I went to the Lakers' games. I got a little fat, and a little down. I existed.

I wanted to go home. I loved Marvin but he refused to file for a divorce so when school was out I split. I packed up and gave my furniture away to some married friends who had put up with my depression on long nights by letting me watch TV on their floor until I fell asleep.

I spent the summer in Allentown working in a job at the department store, doing illustrations for newspaper ads. Six-days-a-week it was boring. Black dresses every day. Hick girls. Dull men. I called Marvin every chance I got, and ate up my meager salary on the phone bills. I made a few friends, and my best friend Ruth got rid of her boyfriend, whom I dated for a while. Balled on my living room floor. Every other night we drove to Philadelphia for the Phillies' games.

Numbers three, four, and five passed and I stopped thinking, feeling much about it. In a two-hour conversation, Marvin told me I'd better give up on him. I went to New York with Ruth and her fag friend to forget him and we had a ball for a couple of days. I decided to find out everything life had to offer.

When I got home my mother said, "He called." I called

him at once. He was home.

Marvin wanted me to come and live with him in San Francisco. I was overjoyed. I told him I'd come. I'd pack that night. Marvin said we could look for a house for the summer. I flew to L.A. and we drove north two weeks later. We noticed the shoddy housing on the scenic routes, and decided our motto: "Trees good, architecture bad."

We settled in Sausalito in a small hotel right on the square. Our room had a huge Victorian bed and a *chaise longue*. Marvin took a photograph of me in the enormous bed, looking like a waif, overwhelmed by its size.

It lasted three days. Marvin got up early one morning to go for a walk. I knew what he would be saying when he got back.

"I need my children and they need me. I have to go back to them. They're all I have in the world, even if I have to put up with her, in order to be with them."

I made him sleep with me, "one last time," in Carpenteria, and we drove in silence back to my Aunt Shirley's place, where he dropped me. Months later, outrageously, he came back, saying it hadn't worked out at home. I accepted him again. I was nineteen years old and already entrenched in a hopeless, neurotic relationship with a man who made satirical drawings for a living. It was absurd but I was still lonely. He never got a divorce from his frigid wife, but he did succeed in getting me a job, and a new lover.



4. Just remember who's number one,
Baby.



WHAT LITTLE MONEY I had left from the joint checking account was gone, and my parents were cutting my allowance. I was getting nowhere. Then Marvin came up with a great idea. He made me lie down on a sheet of shelf paper, and drew an outline of my body with Magic Marker. Inside the silhouette we made a list of the things I could do for \$50 a week. He made some more and

I delivered them to a bunch of local art directors, folded neatly and marked URGENT.

This led to a few polite interviews, a little excitement, but no job. I scanned the ads in the Sunday paper and began to wonder whether I'd have to get a job at the telephone company. Then one of the art directors I had seen called and told me that Robert needed a "girl Friday." I remembered this Robert person lecturing at the school. He was intoxicated and arrogant, saying he wouldn't hire a woman as a designer because "they cry when you tell them something they've done is lousy."

He had been beautifully overdressed, and looked almost artificial in the beatnik atmosphere. My dike girlfriend sitting next to me agreed he was disgusting. We both vowed never to work for him. I ended up not only working for him but being his mistress for a year. He taught me all about fun with a capital F, and adventuring among the beautiful peeps, as he called them.

I made an appointment with his secretary, and sat in his chic little reception room while he kept walking right past me. In the end I waited for the interview for four hours. When I finally saw him, he examined my portfolio closely, told me I was talented, and offered me \$85 a week to be his receptionist-girl-Friday-drink-mixer. I accepted, noticing the sparkle in his eye. He thought I was Irish, like himself, and we both laughed when I told him I was Jewish. I started my first job in advertising by mixing a Bloody Mary.

I juggled his calls, mixed his drinks, kept his appointment lists straight, entertained the Business Suits while they waited for him, took dictation, and began to dig him. He had a lifestyle that needed three times the energy of the usual executive. He not only designed beautiful corporate literature, he sold it

gracefully, and drank all the clients under the tables in some of the best restaurants in town, with time left over to "swing" every other night until three in the morning.

His office was decorated out of the pages of *Vogue* and *Realites*. The windows were stained-glass and the room was scattered with plants and early twentieth-century ephemera. There was no desk, only a glass coffee table and an L-shaped couch on which he'd nap after a big night with a stewardess or model.

He was childish in many ways, like a small boy in a man's clothes, with a man's connections. One day he had a big appointment and asked his secretary, Red, "Do I have to go? Can't I get out of it?" just like a little kid. When he found out it was cancelled he shouted, "Hooray, I'm gonna get smashed." And he did, starting at nine-thirty in the morning. By lunchtime he was calling me Ring-a-Ding and Little Miss Blinky-Eyes, and saying to Red, "Hey, she has great legs, doesn't she? I hadn't gotten past those wild eyes until now." Another time he walked into the office in the morning and threw a box of rubbers onto Red's desk, with one missing, to show he'd scored the night before. He was always telling client friends about the French, English and Spanish stewardesses he had laid.

His ex-mistresses often called the office and begged to talk with him. His wife was a sweet, blonde doll. The first week I was there she asked me when my birthday was, explaining that she always sent a cake up to the office on anyone's birthday.

Robert wore tailored suits with matching vests, and enjoyed looking like a page out of the *Gentlemen's Quarterly*. He wore a gold pocket watch with a buzzer alarm. His eyebrows were heavy and he had a craggy sort of face with a winner's smile. No one called him by his name in the office. People asked, "Is *he* in yet?", or "Does *he* have any appointments today?"

He called me *Baby*. Nobody had ever called me *Baby* before. I started wishing I was a stewardess. I was still seeing Marvin, but I realized that Robert turned me on in a way I hadn't experienced before. One day in the office I wanted him so much I went home that evening and practically raped Marvin.

In a letter to my mother, which I headed "from Swingersville, USA," I told how I was both repulsed and fascinated by Robert. He was gross, charming, immature, successful all at the same time. I told her I didn't think I was falling in love with my boss but with his accessories. Marvin's life was so dull by comparison. On Friday night he took me bowling. Robert would spend \$40 on dinner any night of the week.

The New York office was an apartment with no rugs, barely any furniture, and invoices and purchase orders in dusty piles in corners. My job was to get it together, so that's what I did. I bought some used office furniture, made books, answered the phones, and waited anxiously for Robert to show.

He did, and it was magnificent. He showed me off like a jewel, took me to the most expensive places in New York, and dancing at Arthur and Le Club. He drank like a maniac, but in bed he was even more passionate than before. In New York there was no wife to go home to so we slept together. He's one of the few men I have ever known who could really hold me in his arms all night.

I took an apartment, splitting the rent with my parents, who slept on the Hide-a-Bed two nights a week. There were several hassles the nights they were in town when Robert was there. Though I felt like a shit doing it, I finally had to throw them out when he left his hotel for good.

I had his suits cleaned, I kept a supply of booze in the house, and gave him steak and eggs and champagne for breakfast. We were happy one week out of the month, and he called frequently to tell me how much he missed me and loved me. No one, before or since, has ever treated me so like a goddess. And there was no pretense. He wasn't hung up or guilty. He adored me, taught me how to dress and talk and drink. And he possessed me as completely as I have ever wanted to be. He was jealous and tender and stormy. I never thought about it ending. We were often more like comrades than merely lovers.

One night he turned me on to marijuana with some Aca-pulco Gold. We got so stoned that we were crying and laughing at the same time, and making love. I wrote something on a piece of paper:

"How many times does Bob have to go around the world in order to fuck his wife?"

He didn't laugh. But it didn't hurt either, because it was true, and he respected me more than anything else for my perceptiveness.

Another night we went to a client's penthouse with another man, a Jew. Robert thought the Jew was putting the make on me. He wasn't. The client's wife was. I was petrified, and kept running out of the bedroom and whispering in Bob's ear that I wanted to go home.

He kept slurring, "Get me another drink and shut up."

Finally, I told him what was happening, he stumbled out into the snow with me and I folded him neatly into a taxi.

When we got home, he was in a rage.

"I'll kill her if she ever touches you! I've gotta break something!"

I gave him a cheap lamp. He smashed it against the wall. Then Robert went into a strange number, crying, "I hate you! I hate you because I love you. And I don't need anybody, nobody." On and on, until he finally passed out, and I cleaned up the mess and got his clothes off. Did you ever try undressing a 175 pound man who's passed out from booze?

Robert's partner in New York didn't like me much. He was a fag, and a jealous bitch. He and his fag assistant never let me do any design, and when they did it was trivia for which I had to kiss their asses. But I couldn't say anything negative to Bob about his partner, and I was caught in the middle. While Bob was out of town, I had a few dinner dates, and that finished it for me. The partner told Robert that I was dating other guys, and that was breaking the First Commandment. So, in the spring of 1966, we kissed goodbye on Madison Avenue, and became pals forever. It ended at just the right moment. No hang-ups. Just a clean goodbye.

I didn't appreciate what I'd given up until much later, but I did appreciate what he had done for me. He had shown me the best of New York. And that made living there by myself tolerable. I didn't need the fancy places any more. I was ready to find my own place and settle down to make my fortune. Robert showed me that you have to have guts, *chutzpah*. He showed me that presentation is half the battle; never let the other guy get the jump on you. It was the best training a nineteen-year-old could have, living with a demanding man, who wouldn't take bullshit from anyone, but it was no training for the rat I met next.



5. You're accepted, you're accepted!

S

SPRING 1966 IN NEW YORK WAS brief but warm. The daffodils had bloomed on Park Avenue. People had shed their heavy, dark layers of clothing and were walking around in the sunshine, sizing each other up. You didn't see the rats, but you heard they were there. I needed a job and I was lugging around a big brown burlap-covered box with my design samples in it. Robert's assistant had dumped me, over the phone, the cunt, but I wasn't too unhappy. There's nothing worse than being around a man right after you've lost him. I had gotten together a list of advertising names, taken direct from such super-chie sources as Robert's clients. It led me straight to Harry.

After almost seven years of being strongly attached to one of three men, I was half-hoping I wouldn't fall in love for a while, partly because it hadn't worked out but mainly because I wanted to try myself out as an artist, to make some money and to buy my own clothes.

Harry had his office in one of those glass towers on Third Avenue. The modern reception room was classic-plastic, with an abstract expressionistic painting on the wall, and a polished broad behind the switchboard. Her cold eye passed over me, and when I said I wanted to see Harry, she almost smirked, looking at me as if to say, "Get ready, honey."

Harry turned out to be a combination of all that seemed attractive about New York men at the time: brown pin-stripe suit, with bell-bottom trousers; saddle shoes (outrageous, but he brought it off); cat-like movements; blue eyes with sexy bags underneath; blond, eminently tousleable hair, and a funny mouth with big lips and slightly buck teeth. He resembled a punched-in Belmondo, and knew it.

He almost bounced, as he put out his hand.

"You don't look like a Mr. Something, you look like a Harry," I said. He was a gorgeous piece. A hunk, as I used to say.

He sparkled, he effervesced. He had a weird little accent that smacked of Brooklyn but Boston, too.

His office was typical. Bauhaus chairs with beautiful

caning. Awards, framed. An Alan Ladd poster from the gangster period. A glass table for a desk. He looked at my samples.

The conversation had a slightly comical undertow.

"You're too good for the job I'm filling. You're better than my junior art director, and I can't hire you over him..."

"That's strange," I said. "I've never been told that before."

"Where did you go to school?"

"Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles."

"Do you know Marvin?"

"I went with him, dummy, I went with him!" We both laughed.

"You went with Marvin? You must be pretty fantastic. And you're talented and pretty and you like Mel Brooks. *Will you marry me?*"

I didn't know quite where to look. "Are you putting me on?"

"No."

"But, *sir*, this is so sudden... I hardly know you."

"Be at the Seagram Building at 5:30. We'll go to my house, and you'll meet my friends. You'll like them."

"Right." I was *intrigued*. I floated home, smelling the baby magnolias that were blossoming in front of my tower apartment. I changed into a suit Robert had given me and re-applied my eyelashes. Gorgeous, young, fresh, excited, DUMB chick.

He was wearing Belmondo shades, and smiling. He took me to his best friend's office, introducing me as, "my wife, Francie."

We were to meet his friend and girl friend at a restaurant in the West Village. We got a ride in another friend's Jaguar to Harry's brownstone duplex. There was a pinball machine over the mantle, a brown velvet couch, upstairs bedrooms, wooden floors; the works.

Harry belonged to the legendary Order of Super Rats. Baby, if I'd known then what I know now, I would have played it a bit differently. But that was the trouble. I didn't play it at all. I felt it running through me. I hadn't been alone long enough to realize how good it had been up to now and that I'd better prepare for a catastrophe.

Harry was the catastrophe. He was Jewish and sardonic and talented. He held me and kissed me with no small degree of finality.

"What's going to happen?" I asked.

"Let's not talk about it, let's just do it. Everything," was his answer, and he went upstairs to shower and change, asking me to entertain Howard and Joan when they arrived.

I did, but nervously, until Harry came down the winding

narrow stairs, looking and smelling beautiful. We went to dinner, and I was nervous and quiet.

"Why are you so nervous?" asked Harry.

"Because I want to be accepted . . ."

"Okay, gang, in unison, YOU'RE ACCEPTED."

I shrank a little, but managed to laugh. It was going to be all right, I thought.

After dinner, the four of us talked, drank some more wine, and felt good. Then the other couple left, and another guy came over, an illustrator. We smoked pot. I had only smoked once before, but I made like an old hand. Then I got the giggles, and Harry teased me.

"You sure you've smoked before?" He tickled me while I curled up in his velvet lair.

Soon, the illustrator was gone, and it was reckoning time, Friday night, on an April evening in the city of speedy action and satisfaction.

We were both euphoric, stoned strangers. It was good and perfectly made. I almost blacked out just before we both let go of ourselves completely. We moved together as if that were the only reason for us to exist.

He whispered, "Hang on, baby . . ." to warn me, but I knew, and I hung on. It could never happen this way again. It wouldn't. It was just about all I'd have for years. Maybe something in me knew that. Maybe knowing that made it better.

In the morning, it was raining. He went out for groceries while I dressed and straightened up, did the dishes. That's right, I did the dishes.

He came back, and worked, and the whole day lazed by. But he was coming down with a cold, and got a little bitchy toward dinner time. I made a simple meal, which he ate with little pleasure. When he'd finished he turned to me and with something bad in his eyes, said, "Would you mind sleeping in the other bedroom tonight?"

I said no, of course, I didn't, but felt the first pain. I stayed downstairs, with the small Siamese cat that he hated, and woke up in the morning, in his dark living room, thinking, "Why the hell don't I go home?" I went home.

He called, sounding both admiring and snide. "Who said you should leave? Why the hell did you leave?"

I tried to be cool. "It was time. That's all."

"Well, I'm coming up to your neighborhood later, and I want to see you again. Will you be there?"

Of course, I said yes, and he came, and I rubbed his back while he chattered some shit about just breaking up with a

crazy Jewish girl and not needing another so soon. I stopped rubbing.

"Who told you to stop?" he demanded. I continued.

I went to the window, to get away from hugging him or crying, or something equally stupid.

"It's too much, too soon, polka-dot love." He was being cute. On him, it sounded bittersweet, saying that.

I watched him go, feeling blank.

He got me a job at a certain monster television network as an assistant designer. He called the next week to tell me he had "seen Marsha." I figured it was just to give her back the make-up and rollers she had left in his bathroom. It wasn't.

"What do you mean, a reconciliation?" He had told me their old scene had been "Marsha give, Harry take."

"I don't know. It's all or nothing this time."

"Oh." That was all I could think of saying without screaming.

"We'll see. I'll see you soon. We'll have lunch."

We had lunch. He teased me about my hat, told me I liked the way I looked in it, but never got around to the main subject till we were out on the street.

"I'm going to Spain next week, to decide who I'll marry . . . you or Marsha. Just remember, *you're not through with Harry until Harry decides.*" He kissed me, and smiled, and we both melted back into the after lunch crowds of Madison Avenue.

I waited, hoped, dreamed, brooded, doubted him, doubted myself, wanted everything, and took nothing for granted.

Finally, he came back and set me up for the inevitable fall. Conveniently for Harry, Marvin was in town to illustrate a book written by a mutual friend of theirs. Harry called me at work.

"Marvin's here. I'm sure he wants to see you. Why don't you call him?"

"What could we possibly say to each other? Are you sure he wants to see me?" I could smell the rat.

"Go on. See him. Make him happy."

I met Marvin at the writer's house. We sat a demure distance from each other and talked about New York. Finally, I asked him if he had ever smoked pot.

"No, but I'm going to Harry's house tonight, so I may try it."

I must have turned green or white or some wild color, because he snarled at me, "What's Harry to you? Oh, no . . . don't tell me you and he . . . well, forget it, honey, he's engaged. He announced his engagement to Marsha last night, right in this room."

I spilled into a puddle on the floor, sobbing hysterically. He picked me up. "When you stop this ridiculous crying, I'll tell you the truth about Harry. Now shape up."

We went for a walk. It had rained earlier, and the air was fresh, temporarily wiped clean.

He told me about Harry, and how he was a louse, always trying to fuck with other people's heads, and interfering in a destructive way with other couples' scenes. After all, it was only a chess game, and I'd fitted in so conveniently. Maybe if I could meet the hotshot writer, Marvin suggested, I would complete the intrigue. That way I could help Harry destroy the writer's scene with his present girlfriend.

Harry had dropped acid, Marvin added as an explanation. He had no feelings for anyone but himself.

He was no good.

We made a deal that he'd never tell Harry that he'd told me about the engagement if I would promise never to meet the writer friend. I kept my part of it, and the way things turned out, he kept his.

I forced Harry to tell me over lunch one day soon after that, and he had the colossal nerve to say that he wanted me to be "one of his mistresses."

"Poor Marsha," I intoned.

"Yes," he drawled in his Boston-Brooklyn accent, "Poor Mahsher."

I slept with him again, just two nights before he was to be married. I knew I was a fool, but I didn't care. How could I ever hope to convince the creep that he was about to marry the wrong lady?

We had a date. I called him and called him, but there was no answer until around 10:30 p.m. "Be here in half an hour, or you won't get in," he growled. He was tired. He was also scared shitless. I arrived with a candle, lighting up my face as he let me in. He was undressed and had a stiff neck and back. I rubbed him, telling him, "You're neck is stiff, Harry. You're very up-tight."

"I'm getting married the day after tomorrow. I *should* be nervous!"

"You're marrying the wrong one, Harry. You're not ready for this at all. I can tell."

"It's too late to back out now."

"You're not *thinking*, Harry," I said, massaging him as tenderly as I could under the circumstances. I was too frightened myself to make the first move, and finally he turned over and grabbed me, "I don't know what I'm going to do about your intensity."

We spent a tired while exploring the unfamiliar territories of each other's bodies, making the motions until they'd all been made. In the morning he was laughing while he shaved. He drove me to my office on his motorcycle and as I stepped off the machine, he looked at me with that same bitter-sweet smile, "Another chapter, right?"



6. I'm easy to please, but hard to satisfy.

T

INKIE'S BAR AND RESTAURANT was a cheap novel that you couldn't put down. It would keep you up all night.

Mike Malkan's was a circus where the freaks were rich young men and hard, cool young ladies.

I was introduced to both by Ruth. She was the friend from Allentown, whose cast-off boy friend had been my ride to the ball game in Philadel-

phia. From the age of twelve, when she looked sixteen, she had been quite simply the most beautiful girl in Allentown. Her mother had raised her specifically for one purpose: to be divinely beautiful and to marry well. Ruth, of course, had other ideas, although she probably wasn't capable of putting them into a capsule of twenty-five words or less. She was very, very beautiful and she was also totally insane. I loved her, envied her, wanted to protect her and learn from her.

She was staying in a hotel downtown, with Howard, her ever present drag-fag friend. He'd always had a crush on her, and he was a good foil, mocking her and protecting her. They agreed to show me around one night, and I took a taxi to pick them up at their hotel. The driver was good-looking, always an omen, I thought. Ruth and Howard came out of the hotel looking radiant and eager. They hugged and embraced me, hungry for new blood.

Ruth looked like my personal image of Cleopatra. She had a finely boned face with silky olive-colored skin. Her eyes were like an ancient demi-goddess. She wore lots of black which made her very erotic in a ghostlike way. She spoke in a very soft voice with a trace of Philadelphia in the vowels.

"You've got to see Jody," she whispered to me a little madly. I saw the mirrors behind her eyes, crackling. I wanted to see this guy, but was apprehensive. We spent the evening looking for him. While we sped uptown to 79th Street, she told me his story.

"Every girl in the place wants him. *Wants* him. The graffiti in the ladies room are all about him. He has four or five girls a day. One at around five in the afternoon. He takes her to the Madison Pub for a cheeseburger with bacon. Then they go to his

apartment and ball. He dumps her around eight, and slips into Malkan's to hunt for a new one. When he finds her, they go to his apartment around eleven, and at two, he sends number two back to Malkan's to summon the next one. He comes back with number three, and picks out the all-night girl, who was waiting all the time. I was the all-night girl three months ago. He's just beautiful. You'll see. He's not like anything in this world. We've got to find him. He won't *believe* you."

"I'm not sure I want to meet this person," I said, "or go to this joint. What is it, a pick-up place?"

"Francie, let us show you. You'll love it—have I ever steered you wrong? Have I?"

Howard sat smirking in the corner. He was looking forward to seeing us both do something crazy. And he wanted to do his little number, too.

The deal was, we'd cruise the place with Howard in tow, and if we didn't see anything we liked, we'd leave together. But if Howard or one of us found a guy, we'd dump the others and take our chances. The fun of it was supposedly that in the morning, we'd call each other and ask, "How was it?"

Malkan's was a long, narrow, dark red room with the bar in front and candle-lit tables in back. The bartender was a smart-ass who looked like Dick Tracy. The jukebox blared, and you could barely get in the door. It was the eleven p.m. rush-hour. Eyes slithered over us as we inched our way in. We gave our coats to a Moorish chick named Esme. She was a friend of Ruth's, and never wore a bra . . . just two round band-aids.

Jody wasn't there, but when I checked out the bathroom, it was true.

"Jody Porter is a great fuck."

"Jody Porter is a witch."

"I love Jody Porter."

Some of them were funny, but overall there was a feeling of hurt and jealousy.

While I was reading Jody's reviews, Ruth had been hustling.

She'd come up with two stockbroker types, who bought us our first and second rounds, and took us out for hamburgers, before we dumped them. Then she introduced me to a handsome young thing with silver hair running through the brown. His eyes were unbearably sad, and he was drunk, but he bought me a glass of champagne. He was a pianist who dug Liszt. That indicated some fine degree of madness.

By two a.m., Ruth was ready to look elsewhere for the prized Jody. I didn't want to go. She whispered in my ear,

"Forget Turner. He's gay." I agreed since I wasn't quite ready for that. We squeezed into the street. I couldn't really believe he was a queen. Ruth said she had had a crush on him since her initiation into Malkan's, and never had any luck, just like every other girl who had ever hit on him.

We couldn't find Jody, but I got a look at several crowded East Side bars where there was more action than even I could handle.

Howard went back to the hotel, but Ruth picked up a buddy, and they came home with me, made it on the Hldc-a-Bed, and slept late. She was still planning to trip over Jody and slept in a sheer gown with all her makeup on. She looked as perfect in the morning as she had the night before. It was incredible.

She dragged her guy out of bed and got him to take us to breakfast at Stark's on Madison Avenue. That was where one might find the infamous Jody at twelve o'clock any given morning. We looked the place over but Jody wasn't there, only couples from the night before, eating heartily over the memories of their encounter.

Then Jody sauntered in to meet someone. Ruth put on a look that said, "I know you don't care, but I'm still very beautiful, and you are still unable to pass by because you remember too much." It worked. He came over, without even glancing at me, and said hello.

I didn't expect him to be so small and vulnerable-looking. He was blond, thinning on top, with a small body, and a perverse charm in his face. He was cocky. I hated him, and thought Ruth a fool. After breakfast, she introduced us on the street. He looked at me like pastry on a tray. I shrugged. The whole thing seemed so stupid, all of it.

But the next night, the three of us did the whole thing over again, and I picked up a body of my own to take home. Just to try my wings, as it were.

"May I stay with you tonight?" he said.

"Yes, of course," I answered.

That was that. He wasn't extraordinary, and he asked me if he could spank me with a hairbrush. Out of curiosity, I let him try it, but it hurt, and I told him I didn't dig it. He fucked me perfunctorily, and went to sleep. Looking at him at dawn I was lonely. I hardly remembered his name.

Ruth called and asked me how it was. I told her it had been amusing. After Ruth went back to Allentown, she called me frequently to find out how I was doing and to ask if I'd made it with Jody yet. She had found someone new to love. He was Tinker, of Tinker's Bar and Restaurant. It was a distinguished

title with a history behind it. Five brothers owned the place. They were all Irish, crazy and 'had a damaging effect on women', as she put it. Tinker was a brother, too, and the place was named after him, even though he was the youngest. He was very tender and had been married, and had a little girl. He looked like a gas station attendant, used Vitalis on his hair and spoke with a Brooklyn accent. He made love beautifully and she was hung up, but good. I had her authorization to go for Jody.

If I really wanted him, she'd added.

Well, I wouldn't except out of curiosity and only then if he begged me.

I kept going to Malkan's alone, and scored a few strange times.

One warmish night, I walked in wearing an elegant little hat made of organdy orange blossoms. There was a pretty face glowing at me in the dark. He wouldn't let me pass.

"I don't know who you are, but I love you."

An original opening.

He was handsome, and had icy blue eyes, one of my main weaknesses. His name was Steven, and he was rich. He had the look, the spoiled, arrogant, bored look. He also had a motorcycle, and he asked me if I'd like to go for a ride.

We walked outside, and I hopped on without a word.

We careened down FDR Drive so fast that I thought my eyelashes would come unglued. When we got back, my heart was beating double-time, partly from fear, partly from excitement. He was terrifying.

He drove me home in a big white Cadillac. I didn't really notice how drunk he was until I came out of the bathroom and found him perched on the windowsill. He was looking straight down, eleven floors, and smiling like a madman.

He looked up at me, broadening the smile.

"Well now, shall I jump out your window? I think I might like that. Yes, that would be a thrill."

I walked very slowly over to the window, believing he meant every word. I put my hands on his cheeks and kissed him softly. I was trembling.

"I wouldn't know where to send your body. And besides, we haven't made love yet."

"Will that make a difference?"

"It might. But then again it might not. Try."

"You are going to love me." He seemed so sad when he went inside me, and we were crying together before it was over. We slept in each other's arms, and neither bothered to unwind our "stories."

When I woke up, he was gone.

A week went by before he appeared at Malkan's again. I made friends with some of the regulars, the people who literally lived in the place. They never worked. They just did their freak act at Malkan's, passing new girls along the daisy chain and letting the ones they liked stay for free drinks. They seemed to accept me because I was as crazy as they were, or at least they thought so.

Steven walked in, very late one night. His hair had been cut, and he was wearing a naval officer's uniform. He was looking more insane than ever. He had signed up to be a submarine demolitions officer in Newport. We had dinner and he was morose, affectionate, and teasing all at once.

He said he would write to me, and did. Funny letters, in childish script, about how his mother was "creaming her pants every time she saw him in uniform." I felt sorry for him, and adored him in a way.

I finally got Jody on Ruth's 21st birthday. Ruth wanted Jody as her present to herself. We sat with Howard and a couple of New York friends at the Family Table, the one nearest the bar, and stuffed ourselves with veal parmesan and vodka. Jody hadn't shown and Ruth was utterly and insanely drunk. The regulars were enjoying this diversion and kept making nasty little remarks.

She needed to be loved, and it didn't look like it was going to happen. Howard and I tried to protect her, but it was useless.

At one-thirty she staggered out, and I didn't stop her. By that time I was a bit fed up with her dramatics. I moved up to the bar for a few more drinks.

I flicked a few cruising creeps off my shoulders, and chatted with the regulars. Finally, I asked one of them to take me home, and just as we were walking out the door, Jody arrived grandly, in his Alfa Romeo, alone. He stopped me.

"Hey, You."

I turned. "Yes, Mr. Porter?"

"Where do you think you're going?"

"Home?"

"No. Don't go. Tonight is your night. Come back in and be good."

"Why should I?"

"Because you need it."

I shrugged at my friend, who smiled indulgently at the familiar sight of Jody knocking over another sucker. While Jody made his greetings to all, I walked back inside, and sat down with my friends. He came over to the table, sat next to me, and

exchanged small talk with the girl on his other side. All the time, under the table, doing great things to my knee.

At three-thirty, the place began to empty out, and he turned to talk to me for the first time.

"You want me, don't you?"

I hesitated, wanting to be clever.

"Shall I tell you truth, tell you what you expect to be told?"

"The truth."

"Okay, I want you. I've wanted you. Satisfied?"

"I'm easy to please, but hard to satisfy."

We left, all the others watching, *amused*. It was their favorite word. Who cared? They were all a bunch of neurotic jerks, anyway. Jody was the Blue-Ribbon Bullshitter, and I was looking forward to him very much.

Somebody to burn out Harry's impression forever.

As we reached the door, one of the girls yelled that Ruth was on the phone asking for Jody and she sounded suicidal. He held out his thumb, turned down. There was nothing I could do. Jody was definitely making all the decisions tonight.

We drove across town.

"Ruth is your friend, isn't she?"

"Yes, and you know how she feels about you."

"It doesn't matter. You have me now. From now until then."

"Yes."

"I'm taking us to a friend's house. Is that all right?"

"Yes."

His friend was a queen who owned part of one of the chic discotheques. The house was weird, with a stuffed tiger's head on the wall and zebra-striped covers on the Louis XIV chairs. We drank brandy, and the friend looked at me as if I were a fake antique.

I was bored.

Then the friend went to bed, and Jody took me by the hand into the bathroom.

"Sit on the can," he said. I was puzzled, drunk.

"Now, spread your legs. I'm going to take a piss."

I obeyed, and watched his little smile. He held himself out, and the warm wetness fell between my thighs. I looked at his face, which was impassive. Funny, the expression men have when they're urinating.

I laughed. Marvelous, original Jody Porter, showing me one more enlightened activity of Western Man, New York style. It wasn't exactly what Mom had hoped for.

He led me into the bedroom.

"This is where we live." The bed had black sheets, and I almost laughed again. But they made my skin whiter than ever, like moonlight. He was slow, deliberate, graceful. If I hadn't wanted him before, I suddenly felt his excitement now, and arched to take him. We got lost together, touching each other everywhere, silk on silk. He was weightless, rhythmic, perfect.

He gasped a few times when he was coming, and I had to stop a laugh. All the girls around Malkan's who'd heard it could imitate it perfectly. Now I'd be able to.

He fell back, floating in the dark. Just as Ruth had said, he didn't perspire, not even a little. I lay next to him, watching him sleep. I was just falling asleep when I felt someone walking around in the room.

"We have a visitor," I whispered as if whoever it was couldn't hear.

"Don't worry, it's only Friend," he mumbled, and cradled me in his arms. Friend tiptoed out. Morning crept under the shades, and Jody's show was over.

He made his calls, emptied his pockets to give me my cab fare, and said he'd see me. He never called, but I saw him again.

The next time was at my apartment. Just before we got into bed he said, "Make sure there are fresh eggs, butter and grating cheese, for the morning."

"WHY?"

"Because, my dear, when you wake up, I am going to make you the best fucking omelet you have ever had. And I'm going to serve it to you in bed."

And so he did. He had been to the Cordon Bleu in Paris, and he had been taught how to make an omelet. And made them perfectly as part of his act.

He made a few calls and left, and I didn't see him again at Malkan's for a long time. But when Ruth came in, I found out that the night of her birthday, when Jody stole me so neatly, he had planned to see her the next day. In fact, he had gone directly to her after leaving me. She hadn't known he'd been with me, and after we got over the jealousy part, we both laughed at the way we'd been used and decided the next time he took either of us, the other would come in right in the middle of the action wearing a wig and a mask, so he'd think he was fucking her twin. We also thought of a parade of girls holding candles to enter his apartment nude, singing *Kyrie Eleison*.

I was dating several people: a hairdresser from Sassoon, a producer from Screen Gems, an agent from William Morris, a couple of art directors from my agency, but none of them made me feel alive. It was the end of my first year in New York, and

I wanted an old man. That means someone you can depend on, someone who won't get up and leave in the middle of the night, someone who will buy your dinner and give you birthday presents. Someone to love.

It wasn't hard to lose hope. Someone told me Harry was happy with his wife. His name still echoed loudly in my flesh. He had moved to a bigger agency. He'd become a star.

I got frustrated. I made a list, like Ruth had, of all the guys I had plucked from the sandbox. There were too many of them, and too many without names. I looked into the mirror, and screamed, or at least wanted to.

Where the fuck was I going? I was becoming just another member of the cunt-and-cock brigade.

I hated my life and thought a lot about different ways of killing myself. On \$6000 a year I couldn't afford an analyst, so I went to a mental health institution, where Martha, a psychiatric social worker, would talk to me twice a week for \$15. She didn't help either.

Every night I got home from work and phoned out for something fattening and depressing to eat to the delicatessen like meatball sandwiches and Danish ice cream. The shrink at the institute gave me some anti-depressant pills that didn't work.

On weekends, I hopped on a bus to Allentown and lay bundled in my grandmother's crocheted blanket, not talking. My parents tried to interest me in things. They took me to the movies but I couldn't snap out of it.

My mother took me to a diet doctor who asked me why I wanted his help.

"Because I hate myself," I said, "because I'm fat, and don't date anybody and I want to die."

He gave me a shot, and some pills and prescribed a diet, all of which lost me six pounds, and, of course, made me totally manic. Before I'd been a docile junior copywriter, swallowing all my boss's changes like spoonfuls of sugar. Now that I was on those speedy pills, things changed.

My boss was completely professional. She was also very weird. She kept joking with "her people" about making "30 by 30". If you weren't making thirty thousand dollars a year by the time you were thirty, then you were a hack. She was also very award-conscious, and politically "in" with the people at the agency. I didn't find out whether she was really "in" until a crisis blossomed. But for the first five months I worked there, the agency was my whole existence, and since I was as down as I had ever been in my life, I let her nitpick all the copy I wrote, and was so obedient that she asked me to share a special taxi in

the mornings, and often took me to breakfast. I didn't really like her, but she fascinated me with the way she ordered her life into neat compartments. She once said to me that she wished a computer could be programmed to make her life decisions for her.

I would come in to the office at eight-thirty, work my guts out, go to the gym, go home and change, and rush across town to Tinker's, which had replaced Malkan's as the hang-out. I'd swing until three, drinking and shooting the shit with the regulars. Then I'd sleep, get up and do it all again.

At work, my boss and I were producing a radio campaign. I cast the entire thing and set up studio times. But part of the assignment I couldn't handle by myself. My boss had asked me to do a take-off on a protest song. I sat and listened hard to Dylan, and the harder I listened, the more I realized that the protest song was a legitimate form, and shouldn't be played with. I told her this and she wrote a hideous parody that knocked things like the Peace Corps. This caused the blow-up.

I was having a friendly argument with an account executive and an art director. My boss walked in on it and interrupted: "I told you never to argue with an art director in front of an account man."

"I'll handle this," I said, confidently high. "If the ad fails, I'll take the responsibility. Now please get out of my office."

She turned red, then white. "Do you know who you're talking to?"

I said, "Please get out of my office, and don't pull any of that rank shit on me, either."

"Now, wait a minute. *I am your supervisor!*"

"I don't care who you are, just get the hell OUT."

She slammed the door, and the two men looked at me a little amazed.

They knew I was in trouble. People didn't talk to their "supervisors" that way, particularly to insecure neurotics like my boss. She returned a few minutes later to say I'd been uninformed to the studio session that night. Fuck you, I thought, and left early.

Later that night a friend from the office called to tell me something amusing that had happened at the session. My boss had made some dumb changes in the script and pushed the actors around. When one of them suggested the agency might object she'd said melodramatically into a microphone, "*I am the agency.*" As the actors left, in walked an ex-star of the agency who'd left for an enormous salary to work in a bigger hard-nuts outfit. My boss greeted him, "Wait till you see the fun editing session you're in for." She was getting someone else to do her homework.

I spent a long time figuring out if I should rat on her or not. She'd broken an unwritten agency law, and I knew I could use it against her.

In the morning I went straight to the controller who was the insider of them all. I told him what had happened and he said, thanks for telling, but he'd known about it for a long time. He couldn't do much because the agency needed her. From the way he talked, though, I thought something would happen.

It happened at the big internal presentation later that week. We all filed into the conference room with our notepads and cassettes. The whole agency was there. When it came to the "protest song" spot, the Creative Director winced and kept on wincing at *all* the spots my boss had produced. When he got to the one I'd done, he let his mouth unpucker. It was the only one he liked. He went into a lecture on why agencies should never take political positions unless they're working on a political campaign, and how my boss had made the customers, young people from the South, look waspish and fascist.

My boss began to turn a deep red color, and I was so hyped by the whole scene that I opened my own mouth, and said words to the effect of "I told you so, you bitch." She practically went into hysterics, and began to get vicious. I could feel little-girl tears coming to my eyes, and a quiet rage rising in me. The creative director was behind me in a flash, whispering, "Go to my office and wait." When he came in he comforted me and said I'd never have to get copy approval from her again. I wouldn't have to worry about any revenge from my boss, he'd take care of that.

Finally my depression seemed to be lifting. I felt I'd passed some sort of initiation test. I'd won a guerrilla campaign in the agency and felt proud I'd done it by myself. I remembered old Robert's lesson and laughed.

Ad agency politics still puzzle me, if I think about them at all.

In 1966, I was completely baffled. During that period, there was only one way to get a good agency job.

Her name was Judy. She was a five foot power-tripping cunt who knew all the creative directors at the best agencies. She peddled copywriters and art directors, collecting ten percent of the annual salary from the employers.

She would get you a job, then call six months later: "Are you happy with them (cackle, cackle) . . . oh they *love* you, honey, I was just checking. There's this great job for twelve thou over at J. Walter Thompson. In a very swinging group, of course."

Using people for bait, that's what her trip was. Harry had warned me to stay on her good side, as blackballing was her

secret hobby.

I liked the first job she found for me, and wanted to keep it even if I wasn't crazy about certain fat cats. It was my first writing job, and when my post-Harry depression set in, the agency was my refuge.

Judy gave a party in the fall of 1966, up in her fashionable little apartment. All the hot-shit writers and art directors were there. The cream of the scum. Including Harry, ever charming, conceited, who slouched voluptuously on the couch with a pretty girl, not his wife.

I clumped around with my vodka, hiding behind my friend Charlie, a sweet man with a special taste for the macabre. He had been blackballed by Judy, and was there to bury the hatchet, not to praise her.

My handsomely streamlined creative director made the classic remark, "Francie, haven't you put on a little weight? It's quite becoming, you know."

I tried to smile, but the nausea was getting worse. I fluttered my lashes, lowered my head, and drifted toward Charles.

He steered me to the lobby and a cab. All the way across Central Park, I kept leaning out the window, thinking I was going to spew Judy's Smirnoff all over the seat. The driver was Joe Perceptive.

"Think you're gonna make it?"

"Yeah, sure. Just GET ME TO 66TH AND AMSTERDAM!"

Once safely inside my apartment, I collapsed on the bed trying to wish the sick stomach to sleep. I was alone. The room revolved even faster when I closed my eyes. God, Harry saw me tonight. Finally, I gave in to my thoughts.

"Fuck it, I'll vomit, and get rid of the poison." I did, on the parquet floor, right next to the bed. The ultimate loneliness: cleaning it up. I decided I would diet even harder. I'd come back. And I did.

The doctor in Allentown doubled my speed, and didn't care if I showed up any more for check-ups.

Since I wasn't staying at Mom and Dad's on weekends, I started to date again. Some old guys from before Harry, the theatrical agent, Rick, who had seen me through my radio commercial crisis, the horny hairdresser from Sassoon, a photographer, an art director. I started to need an answering service.

My parents still spent Tuesday nights on my Hide-a-Bed, encouraging me to come out of my self-imposed shell.

My sister suddenly came close to me, after years of bewildering distance. She had somehow aped my own path, and broken

with her teen-age boyfriend, gone straight to hell with a married teacher at school. That didn't work, either. So she found herself a real college-age jerk and got thrown out of school for balling in the men's dormitory.

She thought I was "really living," making money with a creative job, living alone in the Big City. She showed her admiration in funny ways. One night, I walked into my apartment with my date and found her humping the creep who'd gotten her 86'd from school. There were pretzel crumbs and other crap all over the bed.

My tousled sister was standing by the bed, looking like an amateur hooker. White lace pantyhose, dirty plastic boots. Miniskirt, preppy shirt, bruised mascara.

"You may go now. I did not give you permission to drag this moron through my bedroom." I was cold stoned. Amphetamines do not make you generous.

"But we're *engaged*!" She was furious, tearful.

"Then go find someplace else to play games. I'm not interested in your excuses. Just get your ass together and *split*." I felt sorry for her. She was so completely without direction or drive.

She noticed my overkill tactics, as did my date, who left soon after the young lovers. So I was alone with his tape recorder.

That night I began to dictate a stream of speed-inspired ideas, all related to a new hip empire called the New Renaissance.

It involved a mosaic film of vast proportions, a publishing company, restaurants, theaters, schools, and, of course, loads of money.

I fed the machine ideas until around three a.m. when my voice gave out and the sleeping pills started bitching for attention. My body's fucked up chemistry still had patterns of its own even if I was the last to know. Perhaps it was still connected to something real, I don't know. That winter, 1967, my mania peaked, and I lost touch with everything. So did my body.



7. The doctor is a shitkicker.

T

HE FEELING OF OTHERWORLDLINESS began during an avant-garde film festival in Lincoln Center. I had bought tickets for the whole series. I was higher, faster, crazier than ever on the diet pills, and skinny at last. I got through the first night without a single hallucinatory thought. But the next night, with a theatrical agent in tow, I went into a cavernous bummer, hallucinating that he was my ex-husband.

I ran to the ladies room, and shouted at myself, "This is a bummer." How I ever walked back to my seat, I don't know. During a break I filled him in on my plan to build an empire bigger than Playboy, and later took furious notes on the films for the film sector of the imaginary company.

Then there was a Polish film, a herky-jerky backwards film, which began with a pile of rubble. It jerked slowly inward, revealing the decoration of a Nazi's room, and focusing on the freaky objects on the dresser.

Suddenly I began to see the dividers between the frames. It was hideous, and as the images accelerated, I had a violent premonition, that if I continued to watch, I would see infinity. I ran out of the auditorium, out of breath, and super-tense. I scribbled more and more notes, and found some people to rap with, recruits for the empire.

A movie freak began telling me about making an encyclopaedia in film, a great idea. I watched his lips behind the light brown moustache moving in rhythmic patterns.

Strange dope, this. From a strange date. Every time I blink I get networks of light flashing absurd images. Like a giant cat crouching over Manhattan Island. I shouldn't have gone out with this turd. Anyone who runs around saying 'God, you have a GREAT ASS!' right out loud at Lincoln Center has got to be a jerk. If I wasn't so tired I could be a good girl and put up with him, but those pills. Shit, I could never hold down a job, work out at the Gym, and build the Second Renaissance Empire all at once without popping five or six.

What's the date? Sixth? Only the beginning. Wait, there couldn't have been acid in that grass. I saw the bars. The black bars between each frame of film! Impossible. Don't panic. Just get out of here.

I must have got home somehow. My apartment looked like a jungle. I don't think I slept that night. The entrails and seaweed all around me kept moving. I called the doctor. One ringy, two dingy.

"Hello?"

"Oh yes, hello, this is Francie-from-across-the-street, the neighborhood freak. Uhh, I'm freaking out on diet pills and I can't sleep and I need a downer, some tranks. Can I come over?"

"Well, I can't see you at my office, but I'll be glad to come to your place later on."

"Okay, but make it early please, I'm really bent out of shape."

He did. He also asked me right out front if I smoked pot. I told him yes, of course, doesn't everybody, and flashed a super-paranoid thought of him being a narc. He asked me to smoke some so he could observe my reactions. Swell. I smoked a pipeful with not much pleasure, even though that feeling of a wave of electricity flowed over my skull, and the switch was on.

He slimed up behind me, half in the dark, laying his spidery fingers over my neck, one by one. I felt rage rising, and a touch of nausea.

I turned around. "WHAT ARE YOU, A SCHMUCK OR A DOCTOR! YOU CREEP, I DIDN'T INVITE YOU UP HERE TO BALL, I NEED YOUR *HELP!*" I was hot, flaming. "NOW BEAT IT BEFORE I CALL THE COPS."

He panicked, and took a bounding leap for the door, tossing a white unmarked box at me, mumbling something about Librium. I didn't take them (paranoia again). Morning fell down hard. But my brain didn't recover its balance, even with sleep.

At the office I carefully typed a memo to God, had it duplicated, and distributed around the agency by a fast pal. It was mostly about the creative director, to whom I was giving thanks on the agency's behalf. One phrase went something like: "He knows the difference between an open door and a closed one, and when the time is right for each." The creative director looked in at me through the glass wall and mimed "Big Mouth," smiling.

By the end of the day my locomotive body felt as though it had covered a thousand miles.

By the time I got to 66th Street, I was feeling unusually spacey, but hadn't realized how badly my mind had been shattered and cracked by the drugs.

My mother was there visiting, but she had no real idea of what was going down. As soon as I began to relax a little I started hallucinating on the paisley fabrics in the room, which was sort of groovy at first but then my mother began freaking on me, and I kept losing her through the maze. I called Martha, the social worker.

"Martha, this isn't too groovy, what's happening now."

"What is it?"

"Ohhh, I'm uh, hallucinating and freaking. Everything is alive. And I can't control it. What should I do?"

You have no idea how funny this was to me. I was laughing at the irony of me diagnosing myself this way and, at the same time, talking about these freaky feelings as if they were part of an ad campaign I was presenting.

"Have you got any grass?" she asked, in a low secretive tone.

"Yes." (Would she prescribe grass to a maniac? Does George Wallace love the black man?)

"Well dump it, like a good girl." This maternal tone came out of her so often that I was beginning to accept the fact that she was, for the moment, guiding my whole destiny. It was a weighty proposition.

I flushed the remains of a very strong, righteous lid down the toilet. I picked up the phone again, in outer space.

"Now what?"

"Now I want you to try to rest. Pack an overnight bag, then go to bed. In the morning go down the street to the hospital, and check in. They'll straighten you out, I'm sure. Will you do that?"

"Check."

I slept clutching my mother's arms, because every time I closed my eyes, I saw weirder hallucinations than when my eyes were open. This was unsettling, and I had no heavy sedatives in the house. It was a long night. The longest.

We took a cab to the hospital the next morning. It was seven blocks away from my apartment. I didn't know seven blocks could ever seem like a thousand miles.

The emergency admitting room was a small dirty room with those curved bench seats that feel uncomfortable so quickly. No one seemed to be paying any attention to us, and I was getting into a laughing-crying bit that got exhausting, but didn't seem to attract much help either.

I expected to see dismembered bodies and pathological killers being dragged in through the filthy plastic doors. But no, everyone seemed tired and defeated, and used to it, while they sat and waited. No panic.

They knew the score. You wait and wait and no one even admits you're there unless you are very, very close to dying.

I was finally shown into an intake interviewing room, furnished only with a litter (a high place to lay your body down) and a chair, a dark green leather job with aluminum legs. My mother sank into it, while the doctor stood interrogating me. I recognized quite early in the game that it had been my mistake to freak out. I'd done wrong. Still I accepted the questions with some poise.

I sat up, dangling my legs the way a child would. The doctor seemed to take note of this as if it were terribly significant.

After that gruelling half-hour eternity, I was taken to "admitting," admitting I was nuts, and a calm spade asked me for my medical history. My mother sat there, listening while I responded with insane laughter to his questions: "Allergies?, Childhood diseases?"

After that, things quickly went murky. I was taken upstairs, and given a large intramuscular shot of Thorazine, the world's most evil drug, the great fantasy-killer, the pinnacle of mind-fucking tranquilizers, the Instant Pharmaceutical Frontal Lobotomy. I remember the two nurses aides undressing me delicately, putting me into the diaphanous fluff of a nightgown my father had bought me for Christmas. I'd never worn it till then.

The drug knocked me out before I had a chance to look at my surroundings. I woke up after dark, not seeing much but the door. The room had two windows with locked heavy gauge screens, both on the same wall. On another wall, a two-way window just big enough for a nurse to look through. My room was next to the Nurses Station, and later I learned it was called the *quiet room*, for the loud crazies, manic-depressives, and hysterics.

The door was big and heavy and flat, without a doorknob. Since I am especially fond of doorknobs, I was alarmed by this missing detail until I saw that it could be pushed open. Then another door, also unlocked, which led to the hallway of Tower Nine. It was not a real tower but had been named after a guy called Tower, a founder of one of the psychiatric wards.

I had my own strange little bathroom. Singled out immediately!

I wasn't to share the ladies room with the other patients

until I took a shower. Naturally, all my sharp instruments like nail scissors, razor blades, tweezers had been taken away from me. I was insulted and infuriated as I went through my toilet.

At one end of the hall was a mysterious locked door. At the other end, a makeshift room which smelt of stale coffee and bookdust. This was the living room. I can't say that I didn't live in it. I was very much alive, even though the drug had taken its toll. It made me feel, very simply, lethargic, against my will, which was still screaming for recognition. I thought about nothing. I wondered if the food was any good there; why the decoration was so bland; why they had plastic leather couches; why color TV.

I had always thought of mental hospitals as places without loud sounds from machines. I wanted to be removed from the machine culture, not imprisoned with it.

There were two young people sitting in the Living Room. One was reading and one was watching an old horror movie on the Late Late Show.

I usually approach people directly, but somehow I felt I should be playing the role better, so I quietly padded back to my room, noting the steamy wetness of the heating system.

There was no one in the Nurses' Station. I was angry. I'd also imagined that constant care was part of the deal. I fell asleep disappointed.

The morning began at eight with a clanking, and a great number of machines moving in and out on big rubber wheels, with two fat black nurses serving anything you wanted for breakfast: a profuse selection of sweet rolls, little doughnuts with powdery sugar, pancakes, eggs, bagels, but no cereal. We didn't have to dress for breakfast. There were only two young patients. One thin, sadly drawn, homely girl called Sandy, an incurable alcoholic, and a peppery sex-pot Puerto Rican go-go dancer (she liked to say Spanish) who had taken eighty aspirins to spite her skinny boyfriend.

After breakfast, a huge rolling tray of medicines was wheeled out into the hall, and the obese nurse called out "MEDICATION TIME!" All the unfortunate zombies in the ward trudged obediently over for pills and blood pressure readings. The really big losers got strapped down in a closed-off room for electro-shock. The equipment for that little trick was the most evil looking of all. I was given two chubby orange tabs of straight Thorazine, which brought me to a state resembling vegetation within twenty minutes.

One does not argue or think when in this state. After all, have you ever argued with a radish or a yam? They don't

answer back. At the same time, I was perspiring so profusely and so continuously that I began to think I'd just go on sweating till I died. My mouth got so dry that nothing would quench its thirst. Eventually, my tongue cracked open in a vicious painful way. My hands trembled incessantly, with a palsy closely resembling Parkinson's disease. My skin turned a dead yellow-gray color, my eyes became super-sensitive to light, and so did the skin all over my body. I moved in slow motion, in a heavy fog, but fully aware of the nurses, who took note of every comment I made, and every change of mood. The "charts" they marked were read privately by the "physicians."

I put the word in quotes because I can't call the creeps I met there healers. They were all totally bewildered by the patients in their charge although they never dared to admit it. None of them had the slightest fuck of an idea what was going on in our heads. We were too complicated for their tired, hassled MD brains. The druggers played at arranging us in neat little rows like in a vegetable garden and the others talked with pained expressions in phrases out of books written decades ago.

After medication, we went upstairs, for what was laughably called Music. The Solarium, nestling on the roof of the hospital, had many windows, and a panoramic view of the city, good for sunsets especially. But the curtains were drawn. Not even the birds could peek at our sluggish movements. The patients swayed obediently, like freaks rehearsing a pantomime. A few were summoned to their shrinks. One never knew when the call might come. You would be lucky to have three forty-five minute sessions a week. The rest was marking time.

Several of the patients returned crying from their private sessions, some triumphant, having broken some old spell, others despondent, ready to pace the halls for hours.

I danced obligingly, not knowing why I was cooperating or why I was there at all. One thinks only in such concrete terms as, "Hey this is a chair. Sit. This is a piece of meat. Chew. This is a pill. Swallow."

If lunch was hot, then dinner would be cold. And it was usually full of starch and terrible.

After lunch, one was forced to go to O.T., or occupational therapy. I drove straight at the typewriter, refusing clay modeling, sewing, and painting. (There was no basketweaving: It was a MODERN hospital.)

I began a book called "Surprise, surprise, Bobby Kennedy is really a sweetheart." I only wrote a couple of sentences, but it felt like an epic work to my Thorazine-zapped brain.

Visiting hours were empty for me. I visited Teresa's room

a lot. She had fourteen or fifteen young hoods coming in, dancing, laughing, showing off their needle tracks to each other, every evening. Now and then, she'd get violent, and toss a full ashtray across the room to great gusts of laughter. The night nurse was another roly-poly pumpkin face, who let all these things go if only to liven up her evenings. I made friends with the boys by buying a paperback Bible for them, a great treasure which they'd always wanted. They could hardly read, so I brought my religious education to bear, and taught them interpretations of it in my room. Sometimes they'd come in holding their breath, and then blow hot puffs of pot into my mouth, as presents. They were exuberant and fun, and on welfare.

My shrink was a stone-faced Texan, who showed as little reaction as a human being could without being partially or wholly embalmed. His Freudian poking and probing was ridiculous and I got angry with him quite a few times. I remember once bursting into tears when he suggested I hated my father. I told him my father had showed up for dinner nine times out of ten when I was a kid and had never abused my mother. So how come their bright little Francie had ended up in a funny farm? Stoneface never quite figured that one out in my sessions with him.

Mostly I complained about the medication, which only made him give me more pills to counteract the side effects of the Thorazine. The heavy doses of the drug I was getting had induced lactation so he gave me a cotton pad and told me to stuff it into my bra.

People in my group began coming to me with their complaints and somehow I became their ombudsman. Every week there was a patients' meeting. Gripes ranged from the substitution of cheap cola for Tab, to bitches about getting no warning about seeing one's doctor.

I didn't realize just what a big influence I was around the place until I got my first pass. You had to have a pass to get out of there, and it started with a two-hour pass for good behavior. I suppose it meant that I had oriented myself well to the insulated world, the cocoon nestled in a brick wall above Ninth Avenue. I was practically high by the time the elevator got to the main floor. I bumped smack into the spade who had admitted me. He had a sly smile and said, "I hear you're taking over upstairs, Miss Schwartz . . ."

I felt great, until I hit the street. If you are fed vast amounts of Thorazine, and you are inside, protected, fed, and programmed for two weeks, crossing the street in New York City is like

trying to get through a cyclone without mussing your hair. The bus, a great loud monster that rattles by before you can catch your balance, leaving you to shiver in its wake. Cars, bullets. People, tough bumpy objects with no eyes. It was terrifying at first. But I made it to the dry cleaners, and took a glimpse at my sumptuous apartment. God, did that tiny place look full of warmth and color. I wanted it back, now. But the time was gone, and soon, I descended back into the upside down jab-wacky world of the hospital, to recover some more.

It was then I found out that I couldn't trust my own mother. After a couple more passes out, I told her I was ready to go home, and since I had signed in voluntarily, technically, I could walk out any time I wanted to. She didn't take to the idea with any enthusiasm. She said, "The Doctor doesn't think you're ready."

"I don't care what the doctor thinks. He's a shitkicker."

"But there's one more thing, dear, that you didn't know."

"What the hell is *that*?"

"The insurance policy won't pay off unless you stay for forty-five days, honey."

"You mean to tell me that my personal freedom is worth less than a thousand bucks to you?" I couldn't believe this one.

"Right." She was trembling with fear, but she was also lying in her teeth: the doctor had intimidated her.

I was in no shape to be told that other people were controlling my destiny, deciding whether I was sane or insane, hanging a bag of pills around my neck.

I built up slowly from a growl to a loud scream.

"GET OUT OF HERE, I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU EVER AGAIN AS LONG AS I LIVE, I HATE YOU FOR BETRAYING ME, YOU BITCH!"

She burst into tears and went sobbing to the elevator, I halfway followed her, continuing my manic outburst, which the nurses were furiously recording on my chart. I began to enjoy the full thrust of the volcano, and let it spew gloriously up and down the halls, causing heads to pop out into the corridors to dig me, smiling faces, encouraging me onward. Then the fattest nurse grabbed me to take my blood pressure, which was up. She also tried to fake me out with a couple extra tabs of Thorazine. I took them in my mouth, made a swallowing gesture, and went straight to the toilet to spit them out. I felt great, and I really laid into my doctor, Stoneface, the Brownie Point Collector. I told him he was an unperceptive and deceiving creep.

I celebrated that evening with my friend Julie from upstairs, who liked Tim Hardin, and sniffed broken pingpong

balls in the solarium. She was my main consolation.

I was almost reconciled to finishing my stretch there. I still had a small corner of independence, like in dealing with the cute Mr. Epstein, a blond nurses' aide who liked to play little sex games in the living room during the wee hours.

I had refused barbiturates as usual, and was woken up by the stifling steam, to pad into the living room, in a druggy daze. He was sleeping. I knelt beside him, and slipped my hand into his, thinking, "How nice it would be to think of love again." The rascal woke up, and put my hand on his fly. "You can't get me excited, see? I'm perfectly immune to you."

But I could definitely feel something happening.

I backed off, and sat in the chair opposite to stare at him, to see if he was for real.

He walked over to me, and with his body right in front of my face, took my hand again, put it in the same place, and said, "See?"

Then he lifted me up, positioned me with my face to the wall, and pressed his body against me, his arms twining and stretching around me. He was a closet queen! Through my numbness, I felt a little sick, knowing he was taking advantage of someone doped-up into a condition of zero response.

He was flirting with Julie too, walking with her in the snow, though he never tried any of the sick stuff on her. I decided to give a report to Doctor Brownie, and when he asked me what he should do about it, I said, "Just make sure he isn't around Tower Nine. That's all. Don't fire him." This seemed to convince him I was being "rational," and he agreed to the request.

Then, one snowy evening a tall nebbish-like creature approached me, and in muted tones, requested that I submit to a special conference. This was the high point of my stay.

In my dreams, I imagined the scientists, sitting by the tape recorder, listening to me expound my theories of the psychedelic personality.

When I walked into the room, there were seven consultant shrinks sitting there, all in gray suits, all balding, all wearing horn rims. They turned on the tape, and the sweet tall nebbishy one said, "Now could you tell us about yourself please?"

"I have a *psychedelic* personality," I replied absolutely seriously.

Their next question was a classic. "What do you mean, *psychedelic*?"

"I've been tripping since I was a little girl."

"What do you mean, *trip*?"

I explained.

"There was this acacia tree on the block near my house when I was in junior high school. I would walk to it, put down my books, and lie on the grass. I would stare up at the sky, which used to be quite blue; and block out everything except the yellow of the tree, and the blue sky. And as the colors popped out and grew more intense, that was a trip."

They hmmmed to themselves, took notes, and looked ridiculous. I added, "In fact, I'm tripping right now on all of you."

"Is that a fact?" said the oldest one.

"Yes, you're all wearing dull suits and narrow ties and horn rimmed glasses, and you're all starting to lose your hair." They didn't laugh. Not very gay, this bunch. I went on to describe my drug scene, my gripe with that lecherous doctor, and my disappointment with my doctor. No analysis was given, but a good time was had by all. I forget how I made them smile, but I did.

I talked a lot but one day the Thorazine was so powerful that my tongue went spastic. I couldn't talk or bring my head up at all. I was led into Occupational Therapy and given some clay. I pounded and rolled it, and shaped it into an Adam and Eve. Paradise was hidden there in my mind, and the figures brought me out of it.

Visiting friends looked at me strangely, wondering what to say. A kid from the office brought me flowers. And an old, close friend got me a job, so the day I walked out, feeling that I was starting from the very bottom, I had a ten thousand dollar job in a fashion agency.

But I was still drugged on the Thorazine, and kept taking it out of zombielike habit. Other workers would shove me along, saying, "Come on, Francie, get moving."

But, it seemed to be over, and what with the sweaty hot walks to the bowling alley to eat chili dogs and drink soda, the evenings spent vegetating in the Solarium, blasting everyone else right out of the room with music, and the sluggish disappointment of the brief sessions with Brown Nose, the eminent physician who finally decided I was fit to join up with the rest of sick society. I would miss Julie, and the giggling fits Teresa would inspire in me and Sandy.

There'd somehow been a sense of community among the patients at the hospital. We'd all been together against the shrinks, the nurses, the whole institution.

The most poignant of them all had been a tall majestic woman, a former analyst who had bleeding ulcers, only slightly schizoid, and couldn't live without Hershey bars with almonds.

It was strictly forbidden on her limited diet, but she'd beg us so pathetically to smuggle them in for her that we did. Her happiness was well paid for, as she always threw up afterwards. Another of her culinary obsessions was a sweet roll called a bear claw, with luscious almond slivers. They must have played havoc with her insides, but the pleasure in her mouth came first.

She personified the experience for me, as if the forbidden pleasure of letting go completely, letting the controls slip lazily out of my hands, was worth all the hell I went through. It made the insanity of the future tolerable.

As the Thorazine wore off (it took weeks to get out of my system) I was slowly able to face people again and try to weather the boredom of the agencies that summer.

Agencies are like homes. Some families like to go out together, and give you a raise at the drop of a hat. The first one I drifted into was like that. Lunch at Charles *a la pomme frite* the first week, with expensive wines and a welcome that was positively *hamisha*.

A deluge of fashion ads followed that made me sick of writing cutie phrases so I took the first new offer I got.

It was through that intrepid agent, Judy, who steered me right into a dead-end for a change.

"I got a real great one for you, fourteen thou, you'll love it, a small creative swinging shop. In the Empire State building. You'll be copy chief."

The art director was a sexy-but-cuddly type, with curly hair and a sweet smile. He looked at my stuff, and was duly impressed, although this had to be pointed out to me since I was too shaky to see it. I was introduced to the creative director, a Mr. Genius Mouse, with a wild sense of humor.

Things were fine until Mr. Mouse decided to split for the big job, at a super-chic agency. In the meantime, the art director and I had struck up a fine little affair, including a very sunny scene in a locked office eighty-seven stories up one afternoon, and a fun episode with champagne and candlelight in my bathtub. He was very affectionate, and had to make me laugh when he introduced me to his dumpy, scholarly wife as "my lover."

One afternoon when he was getting bored I flaunted my glowy sister in front of him, and he took us both to bed with great enthusiasm while the sun burnt itself out. We didn't plan it or think about it ahead of time, and that's the only way that sort of thing should ever happen. Many men have met us together and thought mistakenly they were the first to think of it, but this was the first time the idea had blossomed in three

minds simultaneously. After he'd left, and we'd both crashed, I heard her little voice float over the folding screen.

"Did you like that?"

"Not really, did you?"

"No. Let's not do it again."

And we didn't. Neither of us had had a very pressing need to do a threebie, but it had been something to do.

My art director friend and I were so bored, we got fired together after a train ride to Philadelphia with our president and vice-president. We were doing a political campaign for the mayoralty race. White-shirted men sat drinking in the parlor of the hotel suite, while I sucked and fucked my pal in the bathtub.

About two weeks later, after laughing our way to the bank with our severance checks, we found ourselves calling Judy. She got us planted in a dull agency that gave us both almost nothing to do. I sat in my cubicle all summer, got fat, read the complete works of John O'Hara, and visited my therapist, Martha, whom I had a hell of a time getting back after I left the hospital.

The Center must have decided that I was really a basket case, and they first made me go to a weird psychoanalyst on 72nd Street. She was tiny and Viennese, with the hint of a mustache, and she came in from behind shoji screens, her sexless assistant announcing her.

"Vell, vot seems to be your present complaint, my dear?"

"My present complaint is that that I want my old therapist back."

"HmMMM. . . do you smoke marijuana, dahlink?"

"Yes."

"Vell, we'll have to stop that immediately."

"The hell we will. I *love* it."

"Now, if I may haf your check for thirty-five dollars, please." I was ready to split but I wrote the check.

"Well, they can't say I haven't seen you. And let me tell you, fraulein doktor, I haven't seen much. See you at the movies."

I wrote a militant letter to the institute, and got Martha back at last.

I'm sure she had a ball, reading about my antics in the hospital . . . they sent her my charts. I wanted her to let me see them too, but apparently there's some kind of unspoken law about that.

Judy had found me a cozy spot at Grey Advertising. The right name for the right place. It was the clique-ridden queen of the sororities of Third Avenue. I was in the Revlon group, a tight family. We all knew we were doing asinine ads, but some-

how immersed in getting them done, we didn't have time to get too worried.

Things chugged along nicely until David went to Europe for a cigarette campaign. David was the group head, a high-order pussycat. After he left, I realized how well he had been shielding me from the *really* disgusting parts of the job. I began to get very uptight, and typically for a Virgo, induced a spastic colon.

I couldn't shit for a week. If you've ever experienced this disorder you know it's like carrying a pile of bricks around. And Ex-Lax doesn't help.

I took enemas, went to the doctor, *nothing* helped.

I even went to Tinker's and told the pirate behind the bar to make me a purge. He grinned and whipped up a Collins with lots of lemon juice, and a quart of prune juice. I chugalugged, and waited, but still no luck. I went home.

The next day, the vice-president in charge of Revlon business, a repugnant man in every way, got into an argument with me over something I said about one of our ads. He rose from behind his desk with his "concerned but authoritative" look.

"Look Francie, don't you want to get anywhere in this business?"

"No. I don't."

"You mean," he gurgled up, "you don't want to be a creative director?"

"No, no, I just want to write copy, and collect a good paycheck, and for that I don't need a title."

He was disgusted. His tactics hadn't worked. His retort: "Remember when I said I wanted a daughter like you? Well, I was wrong. You're nothing like that."

I started to think about quitting.

Then good old poison-mouth Judy gave another party. This time the planets were on my right side. I was feeling and looking almost beautiful. I'd lost a lot of weight from not eating, because I still couldn't take a crap. I was trying some anti-spasmodic pills though, and between those and the drinks, everything seemed to be all right.

I slinked over to Harry, who was leaning seductively against the paneled wall, smoking an Aquafilter.

"What's that, your new gimmick?" (Great opening line, right?) He smiled, looking slowly from my ankles to my eyes, and all the places in between. "Yeah. It's my new gimmick. You look pretty good. How much do you weigh?"

"One twenty."

"Get down to an even hundred and I'll ball you."

I sighed, looking for something real or human in his eyes. Zilch. I thought, "Really hot shit, girl." There were more than a hundred other people here. I saw friends in another corner, so I kissed him on the nose and walked slowly away.

There was Steve, former closet queen, vagabond art director. He sat me down with a drink and stories of what it feels like to date GIRLS. It was nice to hear somebody was changing.

Then a balding character plopped down next to me, and started listening in. I turned around after a polite length of time to say, "I'm sorry, but I don't know your name."

"Stanley." He said it as if I was supposed to be impressed. I turned my back to him, signaling Steve to be cool.

A little later good old Stanley came over again, and said, "I'd like to talk to you in private." At any party of Judy's, that usually meant a job offer. And she usually took a commission on every job agreed at any of her "parties." The pretext for that particular party had been to show a film composite of all the agencies and people she did business with.

I followed Stanley into an executive type conference room, just like in the movies, full of Italian chairs in Hot Magenta, with a thick creamy rug that felt like it had been alive, and a stocked bar behind cherrywood cabinets.

It turned out Stanley was the creative director of the fifth or sixth largest agency in the world, and sitting quietly in one of those chairs was the Chairman of the Board.

Stanley handed me a drink or three, while I gave him my theories on What Advertising Can Do That It Isn't. I also dropped in a few extras, like how far behind agencies are with black people. It was a pissed speech, but I could tell by the way the two men leaned forward to catch it, that they were impressed.

"I like the way you talk." He actually said that. I suppressed a giggle.

"How much would you want to work for us?"

Hmmm. Off the top of my floating head, "Twenty thousand." That was eight grand more than I was getting at Grey.

He put out his hand. I shook it a little, shook with the Chairman, and said, "Okay, I'll draft my resignation tomorrow."

I wrote a long letter to my boss in Europe, handed in my resignation to the ass vice-president, and when the two weeks notice ran out, took a week off to look for a new apartment.

During one icy night that next week, everywhere hard and slippery, I went to meet a free-lance client in his office across from Carnegie Hall, and during the meeting we decided to go across the street to the Russian Tea Room for some serious talk. But when we crossed 57th Street I saw this Beatie-haired, Young-Lennie-Bernstein-type kid playing the violin. There was a violin case at his feet, holding a crudely drawn sign reading: PLEASE GIVE MONEY TO HELP PAY FOR LESSONS.

The client said "Aww, never mind him, he's always there." But I insisted on getting a closer look. He seemed in a trance while he played, unaware of his audience of twelve or so. He didn't look stoned, or psychotic or helpless, and the rawness on

his knuckles didn't seem to affect his agility with the bow. I waited until he was through playing, and then watched him re-enter the world.

"Will you take a check?" I said.

He was incredibly humble and modest about it. The client was fascinated too, so we took Richard along to the Russian Tea Room, blue jeans, crappy old leather jacket, red nose, and all. The Client got a phone call and had to leave, so Richard and I got into a lengthy conversation, a "like-to-get-to-know-you" thing. I was interested in this character, an avid reader of Einstein essays, science-fiction, and dramatic theory.

All through the conversation, I could feel the Beatles coming closer and closer into it.

Richard had a girlfriend named Francine, a shrink named Bernie, and a great need for TRUE recognition. Not as a violinist, but as an actor.

It took me a couple of weeks to learn that. We held hands in the record demo-booth at Doubleday, listening to Nathan Milstein playing Beethoven's Violin Concerto. (Don't ever squeeze a violinist's hand too hard, they really go crazy.) We strolled down Fifth Avenue under a clearly visible full moon. He promised with romantic solemnity that we would be together again the next time the moon was full.

The moon was full on Valentine's day.

He came to my apartment and listened to Beethoven, Liszt, McCartney, and Brubeck.

His dream, which he narrated softly into my ear as he caressed my body, included trips to the Philippines, straw hat beach picnics, and musical virtuosity for money.

I heard him with my ears, but my body kept wishing he'd shut up and MAKE it.

I increased my stroking, licking, kissing and biting of various parts of his body. No use. Suddenly he was silent and totally limp. Thought: *Oh no, not another this-has-never-happened-to-me-before-I-must-be-really-serious-about-you bit.*

Right.

He said he felt weird, overwhelmed by the depth of his feelings, it never happened before to him except once, and all the rest. Copout city. But, I still liked him, and wanted to help somehow.

The help needed became clear very soon. I was to write his life story in movie form. In the meantime, I started my twenty thousand a year job, with a secretary, and my name on the door, and felt high.

I spent an entire night and morning with Richard, grilling him for facts about his life, writing the plot of the movie, typing it up on the floor in front of my new fireplace.

He left in the morning. It was a Saturday, so I spent the rest of the weekend typing and editing. On Monday at lunch-

time, I took the script to Richard's agent, a classic Broadway hustler with dark glasses and a shiny suit, the full catastrophe.

I read it aloud to them, despite Richard's attempts to grab it and read it himself (he was a lousy reader, right?) and at the end of the ten pages, there was a big silence.

"Brilliant!" shouted one slob. "Let me see that honey . . ." piped his flunky.

I held it to my chest and leaned back, shivering from fatigue and slightly sick in the nauseous atmosphere.

"How much are you offering?" I asked.

Their expressions changed, and one of them snarled, "Listen honey . . ." I cut him off, "I'm a professional writer, man. You can't expect me to put in four solid days and nights on a film treatment and expect me to hand it over like a pile of doughnuts. Forget it!"

"How much do you want for it? Do you think you could sell that to anyone? We're in the business baby . . ."

"Cut the honey-baby-sweetie crap, and listen to this," I roared, "Either you give me 500 bucks *now* or forget it. I think I could do *lots* more with this property than you. And I'm gonna."

They shook their helpless heads, Richard fumed, and was puzzled.

Later, in a coffee shop near the agent's office, I told him what I planned to do.

"Look, I'll go to England and show it to Paul McCartney, or I'll send it over, *something*. The Beatles want to help unknown artists and writers, right? That's what Apple is all *about*. Richard, I don't think your agents are interested in you as an actor. It's strictly a quick money deal to them."

He had to admit, I was right. He had planned to audition for the lead in *Goodbye Columbus*, and was flying out to California on his own bread, money he made playing the violin in subways, hallways, and on the streets. He was broke, but still ambitious.

"Okay, if you can really get that story to John or Paul, maybe we'll be able to tell my story as it really should be told. But don't knock my managers, they've helped me through lots of rough times."

Back in my plush office, after five, good old Stanley came around and offered me the proverbial drink in his proverbial office suite. The usual casually lascivious conversation, the usual frustrated middle-aged Jewish come-on. I laughed him off, and he drove me home in his company-owned Lincoln Continental with the tinted windows and the stereo crap-deck.

He sat down on the couch in my studio apartment, and slobbered into a pass. I was gentle, but firm.

"I like you Stanley, and I want to work for you . . . but I don't want to ball you . . . that's all I can say. Sorry about that

and you better go home now, you're pretty loaded."

The next day there was silence, and more silence, but I knew inside that I had blown the job. Premonition time.

About a week after that, I was summoned into a plush office I'd never seen before. The man? He was the guy who hires and fires art directors, assigns work. He was polite, awkward.

"It's not that we don't like your work, but we really just don't have that much for you to do around here, Fran. We've been hiring so many people during our big creative change, that..."

Why beat around the bush? "Okay, you're firing me, please don't make excuses." I was insulted. "How much severance pay are you going to give me?"

He choked up. "Oh, uh, two weeks, you'll get two full weeks."

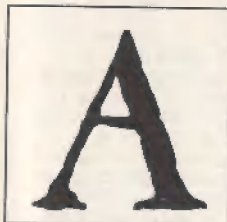
"The hell I'll get two weeks. You can call my lawyer in the morning. I'll leave his address and number with your secretary."

"What?"

I explained about breach of promise and that kind of thing, and he straightened up. My lawyer, smart and sweet, made a nice settlement out of court and I got enough money to pay my way to London and back, and maintain my expensive new apartment for a couple of months.



8. Don't cry, I'm a cunt.



ALL THE WAY ACROSS THE OCEAN I kept telling myself that I had finally got away from the advertising scene, the bar scene, and the noise, even if it was only for a couple of weeks. When I arrived in London I checked into a veddy grand English hotel, which I knew I wouldn't be able to pay for, but I only had one suitcase, so it wouldn't matter.

By the time I finally flopped on the bed, it was midnight London time, but only about five p.m. by my body, so I split for an all-night club called the Bag O'Nails. Somebody had told me it was where the biggies hung out.

When I got there, it reminded me a lot of Malkan's in New York, except there was live music, and the people were more at ease. I headed for the ladies' because I knew from my bar scene days, that's where you get the straight goods on what's happening. I met a lovely red-haired freckled Scottish girl named Gina who offered me a place to stay, which was cool, because I couldn't really afford the hotel.

The next morning, I called Apple, and ended up making a date with one of the slaves who worked there. We met Friday at the Speakeasy, a basement club, very elegant and dark. There was a dining room in the back, upholstered with Superstars, Freaks, Faces.

The most interesting human being there was Paul's brother. He was so disarmingly sweet that I gave him my silver-art-nouveau-Village roach clip.

Which was maybe a little dumb, because I wasn't sure that he even smoked. But he definitely had those big sad Medici eyes that seemed to go all liquid when they were given an extra bit of attention. Since he had changed his name to McGear, the McCartney legions of groupies were not going ga-ga over him. Neither was I, but even in that sleek hip atmosphere, he stood out. The reason he stood out was that he was a real man, capable of understanding himself, and willing to be vulnerable. I hoped Paul would have some of these qualities.

That weekend I went to Gina's *sans* luggage, since I couldn't pay the hotel bill, and moved in. It was a cold water

flat in Notting Hill Gate with a slot for a shilling to put in the meter. I hadn't realized how cold one could be, until I bundled up and had to wait while she went out for change, or until I had to use shillings to get hot water in the tub we shared with all the other tenants on the floor.

Somehow Monday rolled around, and the strange feeling of being in a really foreign country began to sink in.

I went to Wigmore Street, despite the fact that the girl on the phone told me that Paul was out of town, or very busy.

I thought, well, you've come this far, he has to be there. I know he's there. So I went, and he was there.

He was standing ten feet from the receptionist's desk. I watched him turn around when the girl whispered my name into his ear. I felt the electricity, but it wasn't from the male-ness, the animal masculinity of Robert, or the wry sophistication that Harry had; he was exciting to me only in an odd cerebral way. I could see he was terribly well protected, and that he was moody and evasive. I looked at him hard and wondered,

"Is this it? Is this the guy that millions and millions of chicks are moaning and groaning over? Writing letters about and masturbating about, and dreaming about?"

He came over and looked at me, and he probably sensed that I was full of ideas. He was curious.

I gave him the treatment for Richard's story, a picture of me to make sure he remembered who I was and a very respectful and formal letter. He dimpled and laughed as he asked me where he could reach me.

I left Sassoon's address, and the next day while I was there having my hair cut like Mia Farrow, someone handed me a letter, with bold black type along the side, "95 WIGMORE STREET."

I ripped it open. It was a handwritten note, signed love, with intriguing hints, empty slashes. I called him immediately. The note had said, "Come, call, do something constructive."

He knew from the beginning that he didn't have to vamp it up with the Liverpool giggly accent. He had the voice of someone who could be a great mimic.

"When are you coming over?" he said.

"Whenever you want me to. How about right now?"

"Well, where are you?" he asked with a slight Irish over-tone.

I floated into his reception room, and he came out to meet me, hands in the pants pockets of a baggy French suit. He was ready to start the play.

He nodded me into an office, not his own, and put his feet up on a big desk. "Am I impressing you now, with my feet up on this big desk?"

"Oh, yes, well sure, I'm impressed, are you happy now?" It was almost as if this was the first time anyone had seen him alone, in a business situation.

Suddenly there was no more small talk. The questions poured out of him. What did I want to do? What about the record business? What should we do with your treatment? How did you make a movie?

"Tell me what to do," he said. He *meant* it!

But when I tried to tell him, he interrupted, "Franny, where did you get all that gray hair?" I have these white threads and they've been getting more noticeable in the black since I was 18.

It dawned on me that he was more interested in flirting with me than in the movie. I had to make up my mind. Which would I rather do, have the picture produced, or be with him?

I had no time to think it out. He seemed to have a plan all his own. He said apologetically that he had a date with his solicitor, and would I like him to drop me off at a nice place for lunch.

We walked on the street alone together for the first time, and the sun could not block out the way people stared. As if we were in a glass cage, and couldn't see them. We got into a cab, and he immediately started talking about acid. How he hated losing control.

While he rapped, I glanced out to see a crippled chick, all broken and bent over, and he stopped.

"What are you looking at?"

I said, "It's the same everywhere isn't it?"

"Yes," he replied, seeming pleased with this new mutuality of awareness and went on, "I want a complete itinerary for you, I want to know where I can reach you at all times, twenty-four hours a day." He smiled the cosmic smile. I called his secretary after lunch and she put me right through, saying Paul was expecting my call.

"Hi, I'm sorry I can't see you any more today, but I've got these terrible meetin's. And I have to go away tomorrow. Will you be all right till I get back?"

"Sure, I'll be all right." Then I thought what the hell did he mean by that? Was he testing me to see if I'd ask for bread?

Then he used a favorite expression of mine, "I'll see you later." When a man says that, I usually want to scream. It always means tragedy, or at least a lot of waiting.

So he went away, and a month went by. I wrote to him in

Scotland, but he never got the letters. He was with his fiancée, Jane. He had been to New York, with John, and had met my sister, though I didn't discover this until I'd moved into my own flat.

I'd gotten some money from a young millionaire, and I hadn't even had to bull him to get it. He'd been really sweet. I used the money to rent a flat in Chelsea. I hung around there most of the time, having gotten tired of hanging around Chelsea digging the freaks. They were a little like the sandbox New Yorkers, only they had more style. I met one called Peter Slemming who was really a friend, and we spent lots of times together, going to movies, and drinking.

The phone rang, finally. *He* said hello and I said hello and I thought it was someone else. He said, "No it's *me*." The Great Me, who had met my sister.

"What did you think of her?"

"She's the *nicest nymphomaniac I ever met*."

"Now you're embarrassing me." I hoped she hadn't.

"No, she looked good. That's nothing to be ashamed of."

"I'm sure you were a perfect gentleman. Now what are you doing?"

"Shining my shoes," he answered.

"That's good. Every good boy should shine his shoes. When are you recording?"

He excused himself, and as if the other three were sitting there digging the whole conversation, yelled, "Hey fellas, when are we recording?"

He came back to the phone. That evening. Eight, Abbey Road, EMI studios. Could I make it? Could I ever. Opening the big double doors to the cavernous studio, I caught a frieze of four Beatles, gathered around a grand piano, four owls, gazing with half-amused looks at me approaching.

Paul was wearing his tightest and sexiest dark green pants; no more the baggy businessman, now the rave-up rocker.

He seemed taller, ready for the music, and I had to reach up when he asked me to massage his shoulders.

At the beginning, I huddled in a corner, digging Yoko's sweetness, but by the time the hash and goodies were out, I was dancing to a pulsing "Revolution." The music filled the flesh, and was alive all by itself, carrying us along into the night.

I sang backing with George, smiling and doing a Ray Charles falsetto. There was much laughter and electricity, and a covering cloud of incense.

The chauffeur drove John and Yoko and Paul and me to his house, and they disappeared behind the black gates, Paul still

strumming "Wait and see, wait and see." The chauffeur drove me home.

I fell onto the pillow still throbbing with the "Revolution" beat. The moon lit up the Avedon black and white panorama, hung above my fireplace, and I flashed: *they were from another planet, and not real at all*.

I thought about how badly I wanted to get there, behind those black gates.

A few more sessions, with too many visitors, and I was not sure anything would ever happen. I wrote him an illustrated note saying, "Dear Mr. Plump, I think I'm going to have to go home soon. When Am I Going To See You?"

That evening the session was canceled, and I called him from the studio.

"I'm disappointed. I wanted to talk with you."

"Tomorrow will be better," he said mysteriously.

So Sunday, when I went down the stairs to get some milk, I discovered a telegram, "MAKE IT MONDAY, MR. P." Zapped!

Monday morning, in the bathtub, curlers entwined in hair; the doorbell screamed for attention. I ripped the rollers out, powdered my nose, and ran downstairs in my culotte pajamas to let him in.

He settled right into a chair, with me on his lap. The eyes were bigger than ever, and the kisses started on the neck and worked their way into more interesting places. The sheepdog followed us into the bedroom to watch.

He was brown from sunning himself up in Wales at his brother's wedding. Pink cheeked, he fell asleep after, and I lay there looking at his face, not sure how to make it seem more real.

He hadn't been terribly good or terribly bad. He seemed to rush into it, as if thinking about it too much would mean he wouldn't make it.

After breakfast, we visited friends in the country and ran barefoot in the rain.

The lady of the house took me aside, and said meaningfully, "Be thankful for whatever time you have." I looked at her, puzzled, and then understood what she meant. She was probably right, I thought. It might be exhausting, but it would be good.

I didn't expect his goodbye to be qualified, but it was. About eight p.m., the light still pink and fading, his paranoia rising, he said, "Don't take this seriously."

"What?"

"This goodbye."

I didn't hear from him for eight days. This time he showed up at five o'clock in the morning. I ran down to the door. He needed a shave, and looked forlorn and spaced out of his mind. He ran me up the stairs like before, half-singing, "It's F-Day, it's F-Day."

As he was pushing me back into the pillows, moving, dancing over me, I looked at his face, and asked, "Are you in love with me?"

He just whispered, "I don't know. I don't know, I don't know." I wondered if he had had a fight with the girl. I wanted more definition to it. I wanted to confront him and so it started to get a little crazy.

I wasn't really in love with him. His nervous aura was almost coy, but after bullshitting around with myself, I went to the studio.

During the tea break I struck up a conversation about contraceptives. He had never asked me if I took the pill, as if he wanted chance to decide our future.

He said we would go to his house after the session. I waited, and soon it was three a.m. and we stumbled out into the dark, past the forlorn and patient groupies.

Sitting in front of the fireplace, watching him light the fire with his metal fire-gun, I laughed inwardly, remembering the shillings I'd put in Gina's meter. He poured us a drink, and began to unwind, talking, almost melodramatically, about himself. It all seemed to lead inevitably to the writing of his saddest and most beautiful song, the one about his fiancée who wouldn't give him what he wanted most of all. Now he had chosen me to confirm his doubts about her love.

"That's not where it's at," I said. His eyes searched mine in a tender helpless way.

"Where is it then, do you know?"

"If I were your lady, nothing would be more important to me than your happiness, I mean that, and that's where it should have been for her."

He hardly paused. "Do you think you could take care of me?"

"I don't know . . . we are so different. I'd be glad to try."

He stood up, smiling, and held out his hand. He led me up the stairs to the giant dark room, and we flopped on the immense lonely bed.

"I bet she's with someone else right now," he sighed.

I left a note for the maid not to knock, or wake us up, and we slept till eleven when I performed the daily ritual of making

and serving him hot tea in bed. Climbing the stairs with the tea and morning papers, having snatched the bundle through the mail slot past the peeping groupies, I thought maybe this was the beginning.

The sunlight in England is quite different from California. It's not hard and yellow like New York. It's very, very soft, and drifts over you the way the air in some gardens has a way of doing. I woke in that sunlight, morning after morning, when Paul left one of the heavy velvet curtains open on the wall nearest the bed.

The house was immense, but every inch was filled with his insane being, from the elaborately painted door, and rainbow piano in the studio, to the tousled uncut grass in the garden.

I stayed there, exploring it like I would have explored a doll house, that day, and answering the phone. He went straight from the office to the studio that day, and by the time he got home it was three in the morning, with a full moon.

Before I knew it, the front door creaked, and he and Martha were nuzzling me as if I belonged, not needing words, but just touching with velvet fingers, and kissing warmly. I forgot what we talked about. I think we got stoned and listened to Indian music, and had a lovely time in bed.

It's not important sometimes if a person isn't particularly good in bed. He had his hang-ups, and I think he felt sometimes that he wasn't manly enough. His body was sweet, and beautiful, with almost undetectable curves in it. Nothing to get hung up about, and one could be happy, if one didn't demand too much, or even want too much. The relationship had begun on his "save me" lament, not on a rush of sexual flashes. But he seemed to have so many minds, that untangling the hang-ups in each one would take all the energy in me.

He hadn't formally dumped Jane and so at first I was a secret. I stayed in the house for weeks, cleaning, reading, calling the dope dealer. I was to score for my old man. You'd think he could have taken care of it, but he didn't.

When I started to get restless, he noticed, and just at the right moment, sent me to work in his elaborately constructed playhouse called Apple. My boss, the darling slinky Derek, was the extra dash of erotic intelligence that I needed to face the confusion I was surrounded by. He was surrounded too, of course. He'd been surrounded since he started with the Beatles almost ten years before.

After a drunken lunch with Derek, I would go home to find Paul sleeping, make tea, and if things were tolerable, we would rap. He would have breakfast outdoors on wooden picnic tables,

smiling a little because he was surprised that I could cook well.

The phone rang occasionally. Sometimes it was easy to tell Jane was on the other end. He would get very uptight, very awkward and phony. I simply gritted my teeth, and realized that this wasn't a one or two week shack-up now. I didn't know what I wanted next, or why I was slaving at keeping him happy. He would look at me sometimes as if he believed I might perform a miracle on him.

One sunny afternoon, about five-thirty, my friend Peter from Bath dropped me off, and when I got inside the big white kitchen door was closed and I could hear a pathetic scratching sound, a puppy. He looked like a silky, gray moustache running around loose. His name was Eddie. His papers were on the mantle in the living room.

I played with the puppy for just long enough to start thinking "What ever happened to my movie treatment? Where did this animal come from, and what does the dog mean?"

Paul burst in, still in his executive posture. He said he'd bought the dog for Jane when they were living together.

"We're going to keep him. What's for dinner?"

Eddie wasn't housetrained, and Paul wouldn't let me train him.

On sodden drunk nights, he sometimes got very rough with the dog, and I thought that was quite schizo. With five cats, the sheepdog, and Eddie, I was constantly cleaning up shit, and shit looks like shit, even on an Oriental Rug.

After dinner, the rain came down. Paul was silent, then animated and weird.

"You'll have to go. I've got to have this talk with Mrs. Asher."

The Amazon mother had shown up on two evenings when Paul was at the studio, opening doors with her own keys. She lugged suitcases and boxes full of Jane's things down the stairs to her station wagon. She oozed hostility. The first time, I sat frozen to the couch in my robe. The second time, I asked her if there was anything I could do, and she must have sensed my apprehension. The mother in her came out and, together, we packed cookbooks and art books. She was very hung up on her terrific daughter in a way that reminded me of how my own mother would have acted.

She wrote Paul a note, and sealed the envelope in front of me. I ran upstairs, shaking, threw my dresses into a bag, and walked slowly down to Paul.

He caught the suitcase, and searched my face, puzzled.

"Why are you taking your things?"

"You said I should go. I'm going to my flat in Chelsea."

"Okay, if you want. See you later."

I went home, freaked out, sat by the phone in the dark, tried to sleep, back to the phone. Hours were weeks. When the phone finally rang I thought I was hallucinating.

"What are you doing?" he said lightly. The pussy-tease.

"I'm sitting here twiddling my thumbs, dummy, of course. I'm waiting for you to call me."

"Well, you can come home now." He was serious.

"Give me an hour." It was raining, and cabs were scarce. I flew into the bedroom, raped the closet, and tried to find a taxi. My Chelsea hang-around pals saw me on the street and smiled. With the bundles of clothes, and my radiant looks, it was obvious why I was jumping up and down for joy. The taxi appeared out of nowhere, Cinderella's pumpkin coach.

At "home" my ward and keeper was crooning to himself in front of the fire, a vision of the out-of-sight in repose. For the first time, he was Paul to me. Vulnerable, even weak. But he was trying.

He talked about everything but Mrs. Asher until we went to bed. I couldn't take it anymore.

"Come on Paul, what happened?"

He was sad, but a little proud. He sounded as if he had turned over these words in his head many times before.

"I've told her that I've met a girl who's offering me something Jane never could, that's all."

It sounded like enough. It was what I needed, and at that moment I began to trust him.

Every day of that summer was crammed with events, large and small. Never a moment's break at the center of the Beatle manor. I worked from 10 to 6. When I got home I would cook something quick for whoever might be there. That could mean any one or all of George Harrison, Mal Evans, Derek Taylor, Paul's middle-aged cousin from Liverpool, Zsa Zsa's daughter Francesca Hilton, the list could go on. It seemed like just as I was catching my breath, he'd be waving goodbye to me at the front door.

People would pop in from the studio until after midnight to get guitars, or dope. Sometimes the groupies got out of hand. One time they managed to dognap Eddie, and Mal had to go to the police station to get him back. The girls insisted they wouldn't release the dog unless Paul came. I talked to them on the phone, and somehow they returned the poor thing. Paul was less upset than I was.

When the traffic stopped, I'd play records, light the fire,

and play the piano or harpsichord (Open Your Heart To a Nice Jewish Girl). Martha and I would roll and romp in the long soft grass, listening to the latest mix of "Hey Jude" (there were four or five) on the turntable.

More often than not, I would just be falling asleep around two in the morning when John and Yoko and Paul would crash in, show films, or play tapes from the session. If he wasn't in a good mood, he'd drink hideous scotch-coke combinations, throw food at the dogs and cats, drop his clothes in a path from the door to the bed, and ignore me completely.

Sometimes, we'd go to a club, have a good time, then zip home for the ephemeral thing we substituted for lovemaking.

He wasn't happy. But the big things that were driving him mad were beyond me. He kept on working and writing, but when John came over, all *he* could talk about was how much he loved Yoko. That disturbed Paul. In spite of John's obvious happiness, Paul stifled his jealousy with not-very-cute bursts of racist crap.

He cruised Jane's house, and rang her from the phone in his Mini. She would say, "Sorry, I've got somebody here." He would creep home in a rage, and take it out on me. He never hit me, but he didn't have to. He could be harder than a diamond in solid granite, and just as cold.

Good times made up for those nights, just barely.

Like the night we went to Revolution, and Terry Doran, one of his old friends, told him he should marry me. It put Paul in a reckless mood. We walked through Regent's Park, climbed through the bushes and found a leaky rowboat. Wet, fooling around in the dark! When we got home we were muddy from trying to leap over the bushes round the park.

He was in the bathtub when I stuck my head in the door to check him out.

"KNICKERS DOWN" he roared, pulling me into the water to splash and make crazy sounds, rub each other pink.

Then there was the night we stood in front of Buckingham Palace at 4 a.m. watching the sentries change, stiffly in formation. We talked about the Queen, and he seemed like a college kid, pushing his beautiful nose between the bars for a closer look. We drove round and round the Victoria Monument, and then steamed up to a certain park that stays open all night. We climbed up to the top of the highest hill, looking at lights, catching our breath, whistling and waiting for echoes, answers. A springy rain began, although mid-summer had come and gone. Halfway down the hill, we melted into the grass, and I watched

his round cheeks get pink, his little boy mouth pursed into a pleased ooo. We were making love somehow between our clothes in the rain-spattered grass, beyond all reason.

It might have been merely young and awkward, but our feelings were too uneven to enjoy even then. He was petulant, outrageous, adolescent, a little Medici prince, powdered and laid on a satin pillow at a very early age. People would come up and pat his ass, as it were. You had to admire him for putting up with it, and understand the difficulty of straying from this spot to take a woman.

By the end of July, I was a smudged little secret, even when we were out. I wondered how he could expect it to stay out of the papers for long. I had been seen playing a duet with him at the studio, drinking with him in Mayfair.

I keep saying how he was, how he was. How was I?

Sometimes, in awe. He was so pretty.

He bitched when I gazed at him while he was driving.

But he never bitched when I went down on him at 90 miles an hour, on the road.

WHY DON'T WE DO IT IN THE ROAD? In the road. Long, lush road to Liverpool. We celebrated crazy dawn trips with wine, grass, sandwiches, jellies. He even tried to snap a picture of us together while he was driving. ("Put your head on my shoulder, camera at arm's length.")

I never had any advance warning about those trips. He'd just come home and shout, "Pack a basket, and my bag, we're going to the Pool!" His father missed him so, and begged me to make Paul telephone more often.

When we finally made it to his home city, we acted very proper, sleeping in separate rooms. But the first trip was painted black with Jane's public announcement of their broken engagement. The reporters swarmed the house, and I had to hide while Paul got rid of them. It put him in a poisonous mood, and so did the hundreds of pictures of Jane that were spread all over the dining room table. We hardly spoke. He sang and played for his father, a salty old guy who seemed tremendously sensitive. In the afternoon, Paul would work on "Jude," making the house ring with melancholy.

He had a hard time staying sober up there, and we traipsed under the Mersey to the city to drink with his cousins and pals. Singing in a Liverpool Pub could be fun. Even the autographs he gave were in good spirits. But he wasn't wearing it well. He just wanted to be one of the boys, but he wanted to be the one-man band as well.

The next time we went back, the trip was full of pain. He

was drunk as hell, playing the piano at a party given *around* him in a shabby little house. He slipped away to a pub one of his cousins owned, without my seeing. His cousin came to me sweating bullets.

"You had better fetch your fella, Clancy." (That's the way Paul had introduced me.) I walked down the street smelling disaster. He was backed up against the mirror behind the bar, red and swollen with self-pity, self-contempt. A bewildered crowd of cousins surrounding him.

"You don't treat me like I was me. You treat me like I'm Him, and I'm not Him, y'know. I'm just me!"

I took his hand as gently as possible.

"Come home, love. Come home."

When we reached the cobbled street, he fell down on his hands and knees, pounding his fists into the pavement.

"IT'S JUST 'TOO FUCKIN' MUCH, THAT'S ALL. I CAN'T TAKE IT."

He was hysterical.

"What can't you take?"

"THE MONEY. IT'S THE DAMNED MONEY. I'VE GIVEN THEM A FORTUNE AND THEY NEVER EVEN PAID ME BACK A SHILLING. THEY EXPECT IT!"

"How much have you given them?"

"About thirty thousand pounds." I thought that was a small sum for him to get hung up about, and, anyway, weren't these people his family? Yes, his family. I understood.

"Maybe they're afraid you'll lord it over them if they talk about it."

He shook his head, and I raised his chin to wipe the tears away.

When we got back to Birkenhead, where his father's house beckoned sleepily, he sobbed hopelessly on the floor, while the dogs climbed all over him. I waited till he was tucked in bed, completely asleep before leaving him.

In the morning he pretended not to remember, and wouldn't let me remind him, to get it out clean and straight. His trouble was deep, and nothing I said could set him straight.

The road back to London was slicker than a sealskin rug, and the rain came in buckets. We had saved some grass, which I'd cleverly rolled up in the garden before we left. We got totally zonked, and I asked him some wild questions, like "Do you ever think consciously of the power you have to communicate with millions of young people?"

His eyes stared ahead, blanks.

He stepped down hard on the gas, as if he could speed away

from his demons. I thought for sure we would run right off the road and die right there. Paul was so full of changes, it wouldn't have surprised me in the least. Fortunately, a cop pulled us over and tried to write out a speeding ticket while Paul tried to charm him out of it. There was grass all over the floor, but the cop couldn't stop staring at Babyface.

Paul delivered a piece of Beatlecharming bull about how the cop didn't really have to give us the ticket, how we could all be friends if we tried, and the policeman smiled engagingly. He took a second look at me. I must have had a stupid stoned smile, because he handed me the ticket fast, as if he didn't want to think twice about what had really been going on in that car.

At dawn we pulled into our driveway and found four or five groupies waiting. He ignored them, but one climbed over the wall after we got inside, and knocked timidly on the door. In broken English, she begged for an autograph and he gave it. Then we collapsed till the middle of the afternoon. I gave the speeding ticket to Peter Brown, his creepy flunky at the office. Peter stared at me with a small smirk. Also with a little more respect than ever before. If I was good enough to be taken home to Dad, I was good enough.

If only that were true.

In spite of Paul's long talk with his father about how he needed a different kind of girl we were like a pair of unmatched shoes. He had wildly fluctuating moods, desperate curiosity. I was bewildered, working overtime at a job I couldn't even define.

One consolation: Yoko Ono Lennon. She and John moved in with us while their story was still something to hide. As the two of us cooked breakfast for our respective men, she'd rap with a kind of new, feminine wisdom about how hard it was to make them happy. She was fighting her own battle staying sane amidst racist attacks from the Apple cock-and-cunt garden. She was also opening up her wealth of strength and determination to John. All the same, she confided in me that she didn't believe any relationship could last more than seven years.

John, Yoko and I would watch the "telly" through the evenings when Paul was out raving and drinking and getting it up for God knows who. The three of us felt young and weird and relaxed, and talked about how we could save the company if only it could change direction, motivation. I was amazed that John never said a bad word about Paul's management capabilities. Especially when Paul put thumbs down on *Two Virgins*.

Yoko made opium cookies one night, and the three of us sat staring at each other, waiting for something to happen. It never

did, but that was one time when John read through my giggle to the sadness of waiting up for Paul.

"What are you worried about? Someone had to get the scissors, and it was Her," he remarked.

If there had been something John and Yoko could do to help me get Paul's head straightened out, they surely would have done it. I asked John why Paul didn't do a solo album. It would've seemed the logical outlet for all the ego crap he was laying down at the studio. John half laughed and said, "We thought of it a long time ago. It was going to be called *Paul McCartney Goes Too Far*. But he wouldn't do it. He's too hung up about us bein' Beatles, y'know."

John obviously loved Paul enough to let him run wild if it would help ease the tension Paul was creating in the studio and at home. Yoko could see it, too.

But Paul was treating *them* like shit too. He even sent them a hate letter once, unsigned, typed. I brought it in with the morning mail. Paul put most of the fan mail in a big basket, and let it sit for weeks, but John and Yoko opened every piece. When they got to the anonymous note, they sat puzzled, looking at each other with genuine pain in their eyes.

"You and your jap tart think you're hot shit," it said. John put in on the mantle, and in the afternoon, Paul hopped in, prancing much the same self-conscious way he did when we met.

"Oh I just did that for a lark . . ." he said, in his most sugar-coated accent.

It was embarrassing. The three of us swiveled around, staring at him. You could see the pain in John. Yoko simply rose above it, feeling only empathy for John.

I was sad to see the Lennons go, even though it took pressure off Paul. My daily routine went back to the old chaotic one, and there was no one to share my feelings with, except the animals.

In the morning, I'd sit out in the back yard, sucking a joint to death, glaring up at the house where he slept.

In the evening I'd chase away the groupies, who were, for the most part, a twenty-four-hour drag. When a bunch of them chased me down the street as I was walking home, I understood at last the ambivalent feelings of the Beatles. To be chased down the street when you're tired, or trying to think something out, can be more than a little annoying. You have little to give them.

Paul let two of them sleep in the garage one night, and in the morning they walked me to the bus stop.

"How is he, how is he?" they asked in funny Brooklyn accents.

"Moody as hell. A bitch in the morning, mostly."

"Ohhh, love it, love the MOODS," said the pudgy one. She reassured me that the house groupies liked me better than Jane, who was snotty and wouldn't talk to them at all.

As for my old man, he'd have me call the cops on Sunday mornings when the squealing outside bugged him, but half an hour later, he'd be up at the window, pecking through the curtains to see if they'd come back.

I was getting tired to the bone, and lonely. Paul's enthusiasm for Apple was shrinking. Even the recording sessions were strained. He came home drunk on the nights they had recorded a John or George song. Often, I'd get a confused harangue, straight from the darkest corner of his mind, about how women *like* to be treated rotten. He said he had hit Jane a couple times, and found her more turned on by the pain and tears than his tentative sexual approach. After each of these little mind-busters, he'd look to me for an explanation. He expected a transformation to take place, and I was helpless.

The only time he ever mentioned Linda, the girl he later married, was during a discussion of how hard it is for "people" to make contact with each other. He said he had "made contact" with her right after he met me.

"So why isn't she here when you're so fucked up? Why don't you send for her?"

"I want to try it with you," he said, a little wistfully, knowing he had not given me the evenest of breaks.

If that was a declaration, the effort never came clear. The next night, we left Revolution, the club-of-the-month, and drove to some girl's apartment. He left me sitting in the car while he went upstairs to fuck her. I wanted to rip off the Aston Martin and drive until it broke down. I was stockpiling humiliation.

When he returned, about fifteen minutes later, I was burning.

"Why did you do that? Why the hell couldn't you take me home first?"

"I don't know," he answered, and I could tell he was a little sick inside about it too.

It was no wonder he felt shitty most of the time. His diet was basic Liverpool slag. Beans and toast, grilled cheese and tomato sandwiches. Lots of Scotch and Coke. A hideous drink that gets you two ways: bombed and fat. His jowls were getting pretty pudgy after a while.

And the mysterious little uppers. I'd find them in the

pockets of his jacket, as I picked through the house for his night trail. When I asked him what they were, he shrugged, looking away from my eyes, saying, "Oh nothing, someone at the office gave them to me. I don't use them." He was and is a lousy liar. I was hurting for him when I found those whites, and left the lie standing.

I got a bit rounder and weaker too. The cook eats her own food. And suffers for it.

Being not-quite healthy, I couldn't handle the hostility from the office people. Except for Derek Taylor and Jeremy Banks, they were the worst bunch of ass-kissing, cocksucking creeps I had ever met. They hated me for being close to Paul, and feared me because they knew I'd tell him whenever they screwed up. Paul had been threatening to clean house, and before I left just about did.

From the other three sides, that of John, George and Ringo, it looked like his ego trip might just destroy the whole structure. Ringo would rather have quit the band than go through Fat-Face McCartney's daily torture trip. So Fatso turned into Honey Pie, and Ringo stayed.

George saw it all, but chose to be happy and go along until later. He saved me from utter freakout several times. He enjoyed teasing Paul. One afternoon we were in the back seat of the limousine, George in the middle, on a photo session which consisted of two Beatle limos, several photographer limos, and assorted better halves. George and I shared a joint, the only willing dopers in the car. We giggled, snuggled up, and finally George started rolling up his orange and green-striped pant legs. Paul, who up to that moment, had been trying to stare out the window, sat up straight and barked disgustedly, "George . . . what are y'doing?"

George kept looking at me and smiling. "I was just turnin' Franny on to m'knees." I laughed so hard that nothing mattered any more.

September was coming, and the rain never seemed to stop. Indoors and out, Paul and Francie stayed at close psychic distance, even though they couldn't touch fingertips emotionally. I kept him from himself, promised him I would stay until the absolute end, and got sick.

He waited on me for the first time, a rough nanny but a kind one. He was still angry about the day Jane came over. We had been asleep (at least *he* was) and she walked right in and knocked on the bedroom door. He whispered disdainfully, "Who is it?"

"Jane."

He was out of bed in a minute, grabbing the midi coat that always hung on the back of the door. He looked like a gay flasher. I could almost hear Jane breathing. I dove under the pillows until the soft talking sounds grew a bit louder. Then I peeked through the second door and saw them walking down the stairs, silent.

Into the bathroom, out on the balcony I climbed. He was walking across the courtyard, grouchy. Then he spotted me, and yelled, "Get back in the house, Clancy."

I was back all right. When I got in bed, I could feel the flu in my cells. He took one look at me, and ran back downstairs to mix a hot boozy steaming drink. I drank it down and passed out with his concerned face on my mind. When I came to, clammy and white, he was downstairs, and the carpets were damp from the morning shampooing.

I stumbled downstairs, knowing what this day would bring. It was completed, over. The things he said were stupid and petty, and I was far too weak to fight back. And I thought about home as a refuge from his defensive put-downs.

The mystic shell had been broken. I had been initiated, and would have to keep his secrets well. The Answer: yes, he is (they are) different from all other human beings. But their limits had been seen, at least internally.

One never knows whether a man is from outer space until one has loved him. There were a million girls that summer who wanted to fuck Paul. But not enough who wanted to love him.

I can't say that I ever liked him, but how do you *like* a superstar? Bullshit, he never wanted it, he just knew it was there.

Maybe it was his blind boyish faith that something would come along and make it all better that drew me to the challenge. The impression he left was a continuous high level of nervous energy, not easily lived with. I left unceremoniously after a night-to-day turnabout.

As he climbed into bed, he gentled me to sleep, saying, "When this LP is finished, I'll take you to the farm, and we'll rest."

"Oh, please mean that."

"That's what I said. I promise."

In the morning, everything was different. My American accent was wrong, my looks were wrong, everything was wrong.

The afternoon brought tears, and he came into the kitchen to catch me saying a tearful *Hello Goodbye* to my mother. He wrapped me in his arms.

"Don't cry. I'm a cunt. I'm going out for a while, will you make dinner?"

I made dinner, with my head high, and in the morning, I packed and took a taxi to the accountant, getting just enough for a taxi to the airport and a coach seat on a flight back to New York.

I had the flight home to think and the long weeks afterwards, too, at my parents' place in Newark. I retreated there for the fall.

Life in New Jersey was the exact antithesis of everything I'd found exciting in Paul's exclusive London. I'd lived in an invented, enclosed world, hidden with Paul in large houses, recording studios and limousines. Now I was shut away in Newark, not moving from the apartment, trying to forget everything.

But forgetting Paul McCartney wasn't that easy. First of all, there were the reporters. However hard Paul had tried to keep me out of the papers (and away from whom?), the reporters had gotten onto us and run a couple of stories. One evening Paul had suddenly decided to go down to Apple and paint the storefront windows white. Nobody saw us leave but by the time we had fingered *Revolution* and *Hey Jude* in wet paint on each of the windows a few reporters had gathered outside, wanting to know who I was and were there any truths to the rumors.

Next morning the *Daily Sketch* ran two half-columns headed "Paul and Francie paint the town white." Witty. Keen-eyed newsmen must have picked that item up here because when I got home to Newark the phone didn't stop ringing, with reporters wanting tidbits about Paul, the Beatles, Apple. I wanted the phone cut off but it wasn't my phone. After a week of telling them there was no story, I just hung up each time.

There was also the radio which played "Hey Jude" about eight times every day. I'd been with Paul at the studio the evening he listened to the final mix. After he'd fixed the tape and arranged everyone in position to listen to the masterwork, he'd come over to sit beside me, putting my head on his shoulder and nuzzling me like a teenager. When the tape was finished, he said, "I still can't hear it," as if he was telling me he couldn't hear his own messages to himself.

Since it was the first few chords that spooked me worst I soon gave up even bothering to turn off the radio when it played the song.

I shared the loneliness and emptiness of those first months at home with Harrie, my sister. She'd done her best to make every mistake that I'd made. Harrie had just got back from California where she'd been running after a third rate movie star. He looked like James Dean, only with longer hair, and had an irritating habit of saying "y'know" all the time. He epitomized

everything I found dull and boring in American men, but Harrie was nuts about him.

So nuts that she'd almost sent him over to London while I was there for me to try him out for myself. He'd called me at my apartment in Chelsea, telling me Harrie had given him my number. We ate dinner that evening with his wet little agent and all through the meal he kept giving me these passionate cornball looks, straight out of *True Romance*. He made love exactly like a gym teacher.

Once back in the U.S. he'd left for L.A. Harrie followed him out to California, sent him telegrams, got no reply and came slinking back to Newark in silent defeat. We spent months huddled together there like animals holed up for the winter.

Most of the time we slept but when that became too much of an effort, we'd read paperback novels or watch television. Sometimes we'd watch for whole days without saying anything. The only thing that broke this routine of total withdrawal was when we'd waddle out of our rooms to talk with each other.

"You're so lucky, Fran," my sister said one time, "you know so many really groovy people and you've done so many really groovy things. There can't be many chicks who've done all the things that you've done."

From the first sentence I'd been laughing to myself. "If the people I know are so fucking great and groovy then what am I doing here?" I asked her. "Name one of the groovy people who've ever done anything for me. I haven't come away from most of them with even a friendship left over. Maybe friendship's not meant to have anything to do with it. Maybe we're both meant to be champions of lovemaking for its own sake."

"If it's just fucking," Harrie replied gloomily, "then I'd rather check into the funny farm."

Harrie possibly took this choice seriously because one evening a few days later she tried to remove herself by swallowing a whole bottle of Somnux. As soon as the pills were safely inside her, she rushed into the living room and announced dramatically that she was about to die. I fixed her a vomit-shake which she refused to take, so we drove her to the olive green emergency ward at Newark General where her stomach was pumped.

Soon afterwards she volunteered for a tour of duty at Roosevelt Hospital (my alma mater). My parents couldn't stand seeing her moping around all day doing absolutely nothing and maybe coached her a little with the decision. Harrie felt it was a fair trade for working as a receptionist.

One evening soon after Harrie had left, I was watching

television, alone and mindless. Paul and Linda's wedding flashed on the screen. I watched them pushing their way through the crowd of sobbing groupies outside the registry office. If he could treat her like a human being, even with her lousy American accent, I thought, then he might make it after all. This was the third time. He had to make it work, or else he'd go raving queer and kill himself.

As these thoughts were going slowly through my head, the phone rang. It was my father. He wanted me to get up and make myself look sensational. He was bringing home one of his clients, a salesman from L.A., called Bill who looked like George Harrison.

"He'll be staying over just for tonight. Will you fix yourself up?"

"I don't know," I said, "I'll see how I feel."

I locked the door to my room and hid there, pretending to be asleep when anyone knocked. I was hiding from life, hanging on to the familiar melancholy of failure.

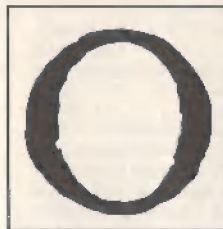
But in the morning when I met him at breakfast I realized how I'd forgotten what it was like to flirt with a good old garden-variety man. He reeled off a list of his possessions: a racing green Morgan, a border Collie and so on. He was no genius but he made me laugh. We made a date for the following week in New York.

We got very drunk in an elegant bar, gobbled dinner somewhere and went up to an apartment of one of his friends. For almost four days we balled, hardly bothering to get up, let alone leave the building. Bill kept telling me he was standing up a married chick to ball me. I wasn't particularly interested in his reasons. All I knew was he got me off.

Still, when he decided, on Tuesday morning, that he had to get back to L.A. to work, he began brooding mysteriously. He finally told me he wanted me to come along and be his "what-ever" on the West coast. He looked at me as he said this like someone gazing at an object in a shop window. I can't remember exactly why but I decided to go with him to L.A. I had no reason not to. I'd found a man after being alone for too long. Besides, I was fed up with Newark.



9. All we ever do together is smoke and fuck.



ONCE BACK IN L.A. I began trying out my post-Beatle fingers on a number of different surfaces. I spent that spring and summer split between various men, beginning with Bill, moving on to Michael, his best friend, with side orders of Harry, the rat from New York, along the way.

I moved into Bill's house and got a job in a small advertising agency. I

stayed with him for almost two months, discovering again what it was like to live with a man. In the evenings I'd make him weight-watchers meals, go shopping or go to the laundromat, sometimes to the movies. It worked well as a sort of recovery period but by the time March came around I was more than restless.

Bill was turning out to be another Jewish momma's boy, who never wanted to go out, and just wanted to stay home and be waited on. It was the first time a woman had ever kept house for him and it blew his mind. I'd had enough of pussy-whipped men before I was nineteen. I was approaching twenty-six and wanted something different.

The difference was Michael, Bill's best friend. He'd introduced me to Michael and Joan after I'd arrived in L.A. Michael was one of the most erotic men I'd ever seen. He came across immediately. He didn't have to move or open his mouth to let you know he was turned on. He'd been with Joan for over five years but they still weren't married, which puzzled me a little, since Joan was obviously a tough lady who could get what she wanted if she wanted it. All through the first evening we were together, Michael sent me psychic messages and Joan ignored the performance, as if to tell me, "He does this all the time, but it doesn't mean a thing."

It was Joan who helped break whatever hold Bill and I had over each other. She called me one afternoon to accuse me of "balling her old man" the day before. Actually, I'd given him an A-1 blow job a couple of weeks back. Just as I was screaming into the phone, "I'd never even dream of screwing Michael," Bill walked in. He stomped around the room, swearing he'd never see either of them again.

Then he turned on me and began shouting that he could never trust me, and that I was too lazy and unappreciative. It was an absurd performance, coming from him, tired and hysterical in his crumpled business suit.

I told him he was being pathetic. After I'd calmed down I began packing and left.

I stayed with a friend for a few days and then moved into an apartment in Hollywood.

I kept telling myself that I wanted to be alone, but all the time I could sense Michael somewhere on the horizon.

I took a job designing record sleeves in the office of a guy called Charlie. Together with his partner, Brian, he spent most of his time hyping record companies and musicians from a stylish little office on Sunset Strip, which had a panorama of Manhattan in the reception room. There was a stereo loud enough to cause a small earthquake and a few boutique clad groupie secretaries. Time off from business, which was most of the time, they spent getting innocent blow jobs in closed conference, plus a joint, a pill or two, or a snort.

I'd met Charlie earlier in the year while working in another office in the same building. He'd liked what I'd showed him: free ideas, free design and more than a hint of good head. He gave me a desk of my own, a telephone and an electric typewriter.

One day one of Charlie's assistants asked me up to a party in Laurel Canyon. I'd developed a mild contempt for this well-heeled animal, but decided to go anyway. When I got to the house, there were about a dozen Playboy centerfold chicks standing round the pool in bikinis. Someone handed me a small white capsule and said, "Take a snort, you'll love it."

I sniffed up a cap and *voilà!*

Some bored dentist in the canyon had concocted this legal monkey trunk and you could get it for \$2 a cap. You could sniff it, drop it or even shoot it if you felt that way. I took a few caps home, planning to spend the next hours sunbathing.

Under the door of my apartment Michael had pushed a note saying "I miss your mouth." I hadn't seen him since the rainy day blow job, but the note sent me into a frenzy of showering, shaving, powdering and tinting.

He arrived later with a quart of beer and some knock-you-on-your-ass grass. We were soon lying next to each other and Michael was telling me all sorts of bullshit stories about himself. Yes, he was still with Joan but they weren't married. He had a nine-year-old daughter in Israel whose mother had taught him everything he knew about sex.

I didn't care if the stories were true or not. There wasn't an inch of me he didn't tickle, suck, caress. He made me feel as though I'd never made love before. When he finally went inside me, I couldn't hold back. I whispered to him, "I was made for you . . . I wish we could make a beautiful baby . . . right now."

I was losing all control and ready to burst, but he stopped dead. "How can you say a thing like that while I'm FUCKING you?"

Talk about men coming too soon.

Michael didn't stay at my place that night, although he said that I was made for him. Men get frightened because I'm so intense. Michael said it frightened him, but it didn't frighten his cock.

I saw him the Saturday afterwards and many days after that. We ate lunch together, went to the movies and smoked a ridiculous amount of grass, but he didn't ball me once. In explanation, he said that he was trying to make a real go of it with Joan. He knew he made my insides melt just by looking at me, so maybe he misunderstood the situation. Anyway I became resigned to this strange platonic relationship. But just as I was beginning to accept, Michael shattered it.

"Would you like to come over?" he said over the phone, "I'm packing some equipment, and need company. There's a good show on the tube tonight. Come on, Francie."

It was the old situation. I couldn't think why not. I dressed up (why?) and went over. We sat together on the couch watching some idiot show. For a few moments I almost felt like a married woman.

Then Michael leaned over and said, "I want you."

"But why now?" I asked, "Why after all these weeks playing friends together?"

"Because," Michael replied, and this was hard to believe, "I think you're ready now."

He began slipping my clothes to the floor and caressing me, slowly, making me forget his "you're ready now." We made love on the floor and I almost blacked out from pleasure. The rug was rough and itchy and when we finally stopped my knees were bruised to the point of bleeding.

The phone rang. It wasn't hard to guess it was Joan on the other end. Michael was so intimate with her.

He finished the conversation and turned back to me with a boyish grin. "I guess my double life is beginning to catch up with me."

I stared at him a moment and then said, "I really don't

understand you at all, Michael. If she makes you so happy what do you need me for?"

"I can't explain my commitments now," he said, "but really I should be over there with her. I ought to be married to her. She wants to have children."

I suppose it's as easy not to talk about your commitments before you've fucked as after. Still, no man I've ever met or could ever imagine would think of saying, "I just want to fuck your brains out and then go back to my wife." It simply wouldn't get him laid.

But however much I didn't understand I was always ready for Michael when he came over, at eight or nine day intervals, with never more than two hours warning. If he'd fucked me any better he'd have left marks. He was always excruciatingly tender.

One afternoon he called, asking me to come over. He sounded moody and morose. Joan was away for a few days. I went over obediently, to find him walking around, and kicking at chairs.

When he finally spoke, he burst out, "All we ever do together is smoke and fuck."

He seemed to be working himself up deliberately.

"Michael, that's *my* line, isn't it?"

He ignored this, determined to provoke a scene.

"I might have been living with you by Christmas, if only you'd treated me right," he went on, noticing my look of amazement, "I'm perfectly serious."

"You're about as serious as a fairy tale. We've been together about ten times since we met. Since when was that serious?"

"You're certainly very sure of yourself these days," he replied, "You should watch out, I might disappear."

"But you'd be back as soon as you needed some good head."

Mock-seriously, he whined, "There is more to me than just a cock!"

I laughed, "Michael, this isn't getting us anywhere. I don't know what makes you think I'm the chauvinist around here. It seemed to me you had the relationship pretty well arranged the way you wanted it."

Michael was silent. He'd had his outburst and he now was ready to talk about what he'd wanted to talk about all along: Joan. This was the first time he'd talked about her since the night I got my knees bruised and almost the first time he'd talked seriously about anything except which position to try next.

"What happened with Joan?" I asked, "Won't she marry you? You always said she wanted to make babies."

"She was pregnant. But when I said let's get married, she told me I had to see a shrink first. I told her no way would I go through that. Next week she tells me she's getting an *abortion*."

"And we all know how nice Jewish boys feel about *that*," I put in, "No, Joan's the one who needs a shrink."

"Oh, Francie, it's so much more complicated than that, can't you see?"

"Maybe it's those other ladies you've been entertaining so successfully," I suggested, "Have you thought of that?"

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," Michael murmured and fell silent again.

"Look, Michael," I told him, "you'd better decide something right away. If it upsets you so much just to smoke and fuck why not let's go for a walk on the beach and talk."

"Don't you want to make love to me anymore?" he said coyly.

"Michael, you're unbelievable," I said, "You really do think you can call me up, get me over, stutter about your problems and then fuck me, all without even bothering to *ask* what I was getting out of it."

However irresistibly attractive he might be, I couldn't fuck him then. I'd wanted to for weeks, but his outburst just drained all that, gone, pffft.

Michael treated me like a drinking fountain. You don't ask a fountain how it feels, you just press the pedal when you're thirsty. Michael couldn't seem to tell the difference between asking for reinforcement and asking for a good lay. Francie was there, so Francie would give Michael whatever Michael wanted. Why else would he have asked me to come round?

On my way home I went for a walk on the beach.

When I got back, I found a pathetic, scrawled note from Harrie waiting for me. It said, quite simply, "Help me, they're giving me electro-shock."

The writing was far shakier than mine had ever been under Thorazine. I remembered my mother and the insurance company. She'd been ready to keep me in Roosevelt until the policy paid off. She'd probably okayed the EST treatment for Harrie. I was three thousand miles away, preoccupied with my own idiot scenes and suddenly I felt very guilty and responsible.

I called my mother, crying with anger.

"Listen," I hissed at her, "if you authorize one more electro-shock treatment for my sister, I'll sue you for violating her civil rights. Do you understand?"

"But Fran," she answered, beaten and tired, "she was so sick. You should have seen her. We had to do it. If only you'd seen her."

I convinced her that electro-shock was a medieval treatment and she agreed, weakly, to cancel the authorization. Then she told me the whole awful story of how Harrie had left Roosevelt and returned home, how she'd had another "breakdown" and refused to go back for more treatment. In the end the police had come for her with a straight-jacket.

I was too tired by that stage of the conversation to take any more of it in. My parents had been so well-meaning, so helpless, when it came to the unpleasant facts of their daughters' lives.

By then I'd become quite calm and suggested that as soon as Harrie got out of the hospital she could stay with me on the West Coast. Again my mother agreed.

About two months later Harrie called to say she was ready to travel. She'd been out a couple of weeks (quicker than I'd expected; maybe the threats to my mother had worked). I told her to come out and stay as long as she wanted.

I said it just like that, but underneath I didn't feel nearly so generous. The last thing I wanted reminding of was hospitals, electro-shock and madness.

Harrie got a ride across the country with a couple of old friends of mine. When they arrived at the apartment in L.A. they literally dumped Harrie and her overstuffed bags on my doorstep and split. She'd probably been coming onto both of them since they'd left Newark. She was spaced beyond comprehension and seemed only vaguely aware of the reactions she was causing.

She had a kind of manic cycle, sitting around bored for hours just gazing into space and then suddenly dropping into a pocket of craziness, dressing up in her satins, fringes and headscarves. She'd parade herself in front of the mirror, trying on all sorts of things from her unpacked bags. Then she'd lose interest and lapse back into bored silence.

At the beginning, we hardly talked at all. Harrie hadn't really emerged from herself enough to do more than ask for a cup of coffee. I tried hard not to let her leaden moods get me down, but her lack of energy was catching. She became a constant distraction and sometimes when she'd scream at me from outside the locked bathroom door, I'd feel like we were children again together.

One weekend we spent an afternoon looking through pictures of us taken when we were younger. There were shots of her when she still looked thin and beautiful, with her thick

brown hair and shining brown eyes.

There was a whole year she just couldn't remember. We went over the pictures again, but they still didn't trigger anything in Harrie's shattered brain. She was very puzzled at first and then realized that it must have been the electro-shock that had done it.

Even though Harrie was helpless, I didn't really feel that I was taking care of her. I was only just in control of myself. We'd gotten very close. We'd written hundreds of letters to each other describing our various hopeless scenes, our breakdowns, our stretches in the hospital. We'd both been through so much of the same shit that we were beyond helping each other. We still had our respective demons to conquer.

A friend of mine came over one night and got us all very stoned on some oatmeal grass cookies. Harrie went straight into a manic giggling trip and was soon climbing all over him. I watched her for a time, and then stormed off to my room, slamming the door as hard as I could.

In the morning Harrie came into my room, crying, apologizing, begging me to say it didn't matter. I couldn't look at her or even think about her. I just kept repeating, "No, Harrie," to everything she said.

She went on crying, hysterical by then. Finally, she called my mother.

Two days later, after I'd dropped her weeping and miserable at the airport, I missed her terribly. I felt in a way she'd almost given up.

After my sister left I strained my back, and lay in bed for a week, stoned to the tits on Darvon and Norflex. A friend called and kindly let it drop that Harry, the rat from New York, was divorced and working for a smart little outfit somewhere in L.A.

Three days alone on your back and you feel like company. What the fuck, I thought, and got Harry's number from information. I called him. Maybe he had changed.

"What ah *you* doing, heah?", he asked, "Wheah ah you living? Why don't we get together during mah lunch hour?"

In less than an hour I was standing at the door, in pain, letting Harry in. He'd come equipped, had old Harry. When he heard about my back, he pulled out his silver brandy flask and his elegant little pouchful of grass.

"Here, take some of this; it should help," he said, getting the problem of my back out of the way.

He folded his jacket, took off his tie and matching shirt, folded them neatly and then folded me into a position in which we could make love without disturbing my hair-trigger spine.

As if this performance hadn't been enough, he asked me, just before he came, "Do you want it all?"

"What's new in your life, Harry?" I asked him after he'd rolled away from me, both of us remembering how long it had been.

"I'm engaged," he said blearily, "She's not Jewish, though. Her father owns a football team."

"Rah, rah," I laughed, "and where is the golden shiksa?"

"In the Bahamas."

"And I'm just something to clear the taste between courses?" I said. (Harry's mannerisms were infectious.)

"No, you're too crazy for that." There was a pause, "Doing anything Thursday?"

"I'll let you know. Is my time up yet?" Two can play the mind-fuck game.

Thursday came. My back was better and I had nothing to do, so I went up to Harry's place in Beverly Hills. The house was small, Spanish and elegant in an obvious way. Inside, it was decorated with pop art and brown velvet.

Harry greeted me in silence by putting on the White Album. Not very subtle, that move.

As if the message hadn't been obvious enough, he asked, "You didn't really live with Paul McCartney, did you?" handing me, as he said it, a joint and some brandy.

"The world is a groupie," I muttered and then yelled at him, "I do believe you're jealous, dahling."

The phone rang. Harry answered, "When did you get in? What's your number? Great, have you got a car? Then how about next week?"

I began to giggle.

"Why are you laughing," Harry asked when he'd put down the phone, irritated that I hadn't been impressed with his little act.

"Harry, it's just that every time I see you, you remind me more and more of a Feiffer cartoon."

"We're all Feiffer cartoons," Harry replied petulantly. "Anyway, what are we doing, sitting here. Rub my back, will you? You've got to be out of here by three, a client's coming over."

Obediently, I began to rub his back.

"What are you doing with your life, Harry, at work, I mean?" I tried again.

"I'm writing a screenplay. A western."

"How's it coming?"

"Lousy."

"Well, maybe," I said helpfully, "it isn't a movie."

"Maybe," he sighed a draggy sigh, "but why talk about it?"

I didn't answer. There was a pause, and I stopped rubbing.

"I want to make one demand," I said.

"What now?"

"I want to stay till three and meet the guy who's coming over. I won't say a word, I promise, and I'll split as soon as he gets here."

"No way!" he almost shouted, "I like our relationship the way it is. Why do *you* have to meet any of *my* people!"

There wasn't anything I could say. Maybe one day Harry would realize exactly what was missing with him. Even though I was near too stoned to move, I managed to get up and leave. Someone could be just so ridiculous and it would still be funny. Harry'd gotten past the point of being an amusing rat. On his tomb they'd write "New York copywriter, who never made it ... with ANYBODY."



10. Didn't you go with Paul McCartney?

B

ILLY WAS A REFRESHING interlude between all my depressing game-ridden scenes. I met him one afternoon at a girlfriend's house, late in the summer. My girlfriend was upstairs getting dressed, so Billy and I made small talk.

He had his little girl with him. She had blonde hair, just like he did. His eyes were the same color as the desert sky and his face would have looked

hard and rugged if it hadn't also been so young. He had a slight limp which all his other movements contradicted, especially when he tossed his hair from his face.

We talked about nothing in particular. There was a pause, and since I couldn't think of anything better to say I asked, "Are you a Scorpio?"

"Yes," he laughed, "how did you know?"

"By your ass," I told him. We both laughed. Before he left he threw out an invitation to ride into the desert the next day. I said I'd be glad to.

When my friend came down, I told her that Billy had been round to see her.

She seemed amused at my interest, "Oh, that's Billy Lancaster, Burt Lancaster's son."

That was where Billy's face had come from, I realized. I remember getting the hots for Burt Lancaster after seeing *Elmer Gantry* when I was sixteen.

Billy picked me up early next morning with a couple of other friends. After stopping to pick up a bike and some packs of beer we drove out into the desert.

When we were far enough away from any signs of other people, Billy stopped the pickup and got down the monster bike.

With a whine that cut through the incredible desert silence, he took off across the rocky ground, came back, circled the pickup and slammed the bike into the sand near where we were standing. He kept his jaw jutted out, quite unselfconsciously. He looked just like his father.

I took a ride over the course with one of the friends. To do it with Billy would have been too obvious. The tough desert plants tore against my feet, and made them bleed.

Someone produced a shotgun, which we took turns firing at an old Chevy carcass, rusted and full of holes made by other bikers and freaks.

When the rotation of bike, gun, and other diversions left me alone with Billy, his first words were, "You went with Paul McCartney, didn't you?"

"I bet you just love it when people ask you about your father, don't you?" He was surprised. He half-frowned.

"No, really, what's Paul like? I heard he was gay."

"He might have gone that way, but he didn't. He really didn't dig fucking all that much, if that's any kind of an answer."

"They stayed at our house once when they were on tour. I hardly remember . . . I was a kid."

"How old are you now?"

"Twenty-two."

He told me about his daughter, now almost two. He'd married too soon, to Ernie Kovacs' little girl, Kippy. Exactly why it didn't work, he wouldn't say, or couldn't.

I wandered out into the desert, tearing off my shirt, letting the hot breeze blow over me. I liked Billy the Kid, and wanted to see him again. A different element.

We drove back to Beverly Hills laughing, sweaty and drunk. After he'd dropped his friends off, his hand came smoothly across the console and landed on my thigh.

"You know what they're going to think we've been doing out there in the desert?" he said.

"Fucking and sucking most likely," I said.

"Well, next time, let's do it," he said, sliding his hand up a touch further.

"O.K.," I replied.

I never did get around to balling Billy. But I was having too much fun with him to care. He slept with me one night after passing out drunk at a party. Suddenly in his sleep he put his arms and legs around me, tight. That was as close as we got to any sort of intimacy.

He felt he had to offer some sort of explanation. It sounded a little rehearsed.

"I like you, I mean I think you're a very nice person. But I had a bad marriage and I can't get involved for a while. It's nothing personal. I only fuck dumb blondes."

I wasn't going to quarrel. It was good to have friends. I spent a lot of time with him, often at his parents' multi-level house in Bel Air. It was too gross to be vulgar. It had been built with a check for a million dollars that Burt Lancaster had mailed from France while making *The Train* there.

The house stood on the site of an equally oversized and

overpriced Tudor mansion which had burnt to the ground in the great Bel Air fire. There were about five different levels at least, all built around a natural rock swimming pool. The walls were made of glass, twenty five feet high.

When I got tired playing with Billy and his friends, I'd talk with Mrs. Lancaster about her impending divorce. It was always difficult to tell whether she was impossibly sad or impossibly drunk or both.

Billy had a gang of friends who lived up Benedict Canyon. There was Valerie, who looked and moved like a Siamese cat. She'd say, "*Done to me*," everytime she got wasted, and there was Julian, who said very little, grinning all the time in a self-consciously mysterious way. He was the group leader.

One day they were all over at the Lancasters and Julian suggested we trip. I hesitated because of all the horror stories I'd heard, but Julian was ready with his reassurances.

"I'll be your guide, Francie. There's nothing to be scared of. It's pure. Pure. Come over to my place. Everything's cool."

We walked down to his garage and out of the radiator cap of a dusty Morgan, Julian took some bright little pink and orange pills. They looked as if they were glowing.

I took a half and waited, curious and thirsty. The others took halves too. Soon Valerie was saying, "*Done to me, dead from it*."

Someone suggested we all drive to the beach. Billy had disappeared. We looked for him and found him passed out in his ramshackle house near Sunset Strip, surrounded by torn envelopes and empty wine bottles.

At that moment I flashed on the idea of a film of Billy the Kid sleeping. Memo to Schwartz: suggest it to his father.

Julian's eyes had moved further back in his head. He giggled to me, "Leave a note on Billy's belly."

I wrote 'beach' on one of the torn envelopes and laid it on the T-shirt Billy never seemed to take off.

At the beach, near where my husband, Leon, and I had married ourselves, we stumbled into the house. The front room was filled with ten or twelve sleeping bodies, and the air was hot with the smell of people. The owner, a friend of Valerie's, didn't seem to like ocean air—the windows were shut tight.

A candle was alight on a piano in the corner. Julian and Valerie moved off into the darkness, and I sat down at the piano and began to play. Too bad nobody taped it. *Hey Jude* was never like that.

After about an hour the fucking spiders started. The little bastards began creeping up and down my back. I got close to

freaking, then I stopped to think for a minute. My body was telling me something. There weren't any spiders. I could see it very clearly: I was tired and should stop playing.

I called to Julian, "Are you awake?"

"Yeah," he answered, "I was digging your music."

"Can we go outside. I'm freaking a little."

My Beverly Hills guru took my hand and led me outside onto the beach. Overhead there were uncountably many new stars, covered over with shining gauze. We sat down on the cold sand, watching the sky and the glowing ocean.

I looked down into the sand and it too was alive. Masses of tiny sandy bodies, like a generation of ghosts, were riding in on the waves. I shuddered, thinking, "Which would be more terrifying, to let them crawl all over me, or to crush them?" They became all the men in my life: I had let them get under my skin. No, I had no skin, I was all nerve endings. I had been doing an immensely more dangerous version of Yoko's Scissors Trick. Each one stripped me of some of my covering. But my men didn't stop there. They had burrowed into the very tissue of my brain, leaving me soul-naked. It must have been a gift of God that I had been able to renew myself each time, and that I could go on believing there was a great love waiting for me. I'd come a hell of a long way from the flat-chested, semi-crippled "Brain" who never got asked for a date.

I pointed out the creepy-crawlies to Julian, feeling that I was freaking again. He laughed and I began to laugh too, quite helplessly. What was there to be afraid of? Julian told me of a plot to put acid in the glue on the back of postage stamps. That made me laugh again.

It was getting light and we drove back to Hollywood.

On the way, we stopped to get coffee. At the counter there were two long-haired freaks counting money to see if they had enough. I gave them a quarter to buy coffee and they said they were looking for somewhere to crash. I told them they could come to my place.

They had an old Corvette and took me up the hill to my apartment. Julian and Valerie split. One of the freaks crashed in my bed, and the other walked out with me to the pool. He looked like a toothpaste ad. He had a pretty face, a guitar and a flea-size brain. We went back inside and lay on the floor of the front room, rapping about nothing, hugging in a friendly way.

The door burst open and in came a red-faced man in a plaid bathrobe. It was the landlord. I'd thought he was in Palm Springs.

"I'll give you exactly three minutes to get out of here," he

piped, all sour lines, like a bad drawing.

We woke up the other guy and split for Julian's. I couldn't think of anyone else who'd let us in at four in the morning. I felt exhausted, my cells drug-tired.

Julian wouldn't put the freaks up. He was leaving and needed the car. The two boys moaned a bit and then agreed to drive me back. I waited in the street while they turned the car round. Just then Julian drove out of the garage and the two freaks raced off chasing him, waving and laughing.

By the time I'd hitched back and crashed, it was almost noon. At about three someone knocked. It was the landlord. He wanted to know why I was still there. Before I could answer him he dropped on me like a dead tree, clutching at my tits as he fell.

If I balled him, I could stay in his house. His wife was eight months pregnant, he pleaded with me. He'd never felt so horny in his life. He was desperate.

As soon as I'd wrestled the creep off me and yelled him out of the room, I called a friend and started packing. I felt the first symptoms of an acid hangover.

A few days after that first trip, I remembered the film of Billy the Kid sleeping. I wrote Billy's father, on notepaper headed "Twentieth Century Schwartz," telling him my idea, saying something like Billy had a lot of talent and why wasn't he using it.

I'm not sure why I sent the letter, or whether I even thought about a reason.

Later in the week the phone rang.

"Is that Twentieth Century Schwartz?"

"Yes, Mr Lancaster," I recognized the voice.

"What are you doing this evening?" He didn't waste time.

"Nothing," I said. I'd planned to get stoned with a friend, but I could always do that too.

"Why don't you come out to the beach, I'd like to talk with you."

"Would 7:30 be O.K.?"

"Fine," he said and put down the phone. He was business-like.

When I arrived at his beach house, it was empty except for Mr. Lancaster and someone reclining on a settee, introduced as Sidney Pollack, the director. He just lay there, filming the scene in his head.

Mr. Lancaster was direct, "Are you in love with my son?"

"I love him," I explained, "but I'm not in love with him."

"Could you explain that," he said, without hostility, "I'm not sure exactly what you mean."

"I mean I care about him and want to see him doing something he really wants to do."

"All right, you tell me what I should do for Bill," he said.

"I can't tell you anything, except to let him do what he wants, and *listen* to him."

He seemed to check this off mentally.

"Are you going to form a company with my son?" he said, as if it was the most natural thing in the world for me to do with Billy.

"What? Oh no, I've no financial designs on you or Bill."

He saw I was insulted, and apologized in a half-assed way.

"I'm sorry I have to be such a bastard. But you have to be a bit of a bastard to make it in this world, you know."

"Do you really believe that?" I said.

"If *you* want to make it, you're going to have to do it too."

I'd just begun to get interested in this conversation when Billy walked in the door with a beautiful, dumb blonde on his arm.

"Fra-a-a-ncie Schwartz!" he chanted, "Hey, Dad, didn't I tell you she's crazy?"

"You didn't have to, son." Burt winked at me as if we shared a secret.

I took that as a signal to split. Billy's friends had told me there'd been more than one time that Billy's dates ended up with Daddy.

I saw Billy one more time that summer. It was during a heat wave that had been sitting on L.A. for days. We'd been to the beach early and were driving back to one of his friend's houses in Benedict Canyon.

Someone suggested we each say who we'd turn gay for. Billy destroyed everyone right out front by saying, "Wally Cox."

When my turn came, I thought of the scene in my favorite lousy movie, *Valley of the Dolls*, where Sharon Tate begins her bust exercises, and then stops and pouts, "To hell with it, let 'em droop."

She was like a blonde Ruth, with all the imperfections smoothed out.

"Sharon Tate," I said.

"She lives up the hill from Julian and Valerie," someone mentioned.

None of us had heard that Sharon Tate had been murdered the night before.

We were admitted to the closed off street through the police line. There were black and white squad cars with flashing

dome lights everywhere. The house was less than a hundred yards from the Polanski house.

Billy and his friends huddled in a back room, terrified. They were as frightened to go as they were frightened to stay. After a while I left them there and went home.

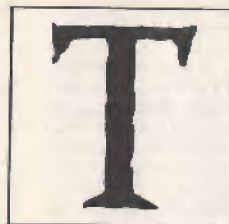
All evening I listened to the sound of the barking guard dogs that had been hired to protect the richer houses on the block.

Next day I took a cab to work. The driver told me that a messenger from the black magic capital of the world, located somewhere off the English coast, had warned Polanski not to make a film of *Rosemary's Baby* or else he'd be the sorriest man who'd ever lived.

I didn't believe in magic, but I knew there had to be a reason for the murders. The mood they left stayed around for weeks.



11. Rolling Stone.



THAT FALL I BEGAN WRITING down my experiences with Paul, the story about Apple and the Beatles. I didn't feel like searching for another advertising job and somebody suggested I try and get the Apple story published in *Rolling Stone*. He was sure they'd gobble it up, so I called Jann Wenner, guardian of the hip testament, who told me, yes, they'd be very interested in any material I had on Apple. Everything I had was to be submitted to him as soon as possible.

I spent hours at the typewriter setting down my impressions. When I'd finally gotten together thirty pages, I called Jann Wenner again and we agreed on a price. I mailed the manuscript off to San Francisco and waited.

Some weeks later I got a call asking if I would fly up to San Francisco to talk over changes in the article. I agreed and flew up for a twelve o'clock appointment, expecting a lunch with the fabled Mr. Wenner. The sun was out when I got to the city and I had time to waste so I wandered around the streets smiling back at all the friendly faces.

When I got to the warehouse on Brannan St. I was shown into Jann Wenner's office right away. He was on the phone, and shoved the manuscript across the desk towards me, without looking up.

He was the first and only man I've ever wanted to hate-fuck. I wanted to knock him on his arse and kick him.

When he was through phoning, he looked up at me, less attentive than ever, and said, "I've got a lunch date. Can I drop you someplace?"

"No thanks," I mumbled in reply, trying to hide my amazement, taking the silence that followed as a sign that the interview was over.

The editing they'd done looked O.K. when I glanced quickly through it in Wenner's office, but the article that appeared under my name in November was almost totally unrelated to what I'd written. I stayed angry for months, and wrote lots of furious letters to Mr. Wenner which I never mailed. The Wenner episode made me decide to tell the whole story, not just the Paul

McCartney sequence. I wanted to vomit the whole body count onto paper, to describe all the pussy-junkies, the breakdowns, the freak-outs. If editors were interested in my story just because I'd balled Paul McCartney, then they could go fuck themselves. I had to get the story out for my own sake, because it was slowly poisoning me inside.

I got a job again to make the money to support me while I wrote. The office had an electric typewriter and I'd use every moment I could to write some more. It took till spring to get as far as Paul, because I could never use the office much until after seven in the evening and I needed an electric typewriter to get my ideas down fast enough.

When the pile of typed sheets was two inches thick I showed it to some friends. They were fascinated, looking for bits about themselves.

They persuaded me to send it to an agent to see if it couldn't be published. I couldn't see why anyone would be interested, but I did anyway. Sometime early in May, the agent called me to say that my book was a "female Portnoy." I wasn't sure how true this was, given the story line of what I'd sent him, but I let it slide because the next thing he said was would I come down to his office and sign a contract. Doctor, would I!

Months went by and I didn't hear anything. I got more depressed than I'd ever been. Finally, sometime in September, I got a letter from the agent saying he'd submitted it to several publishers who'd all rejected it, each for a totally different reason.

I was beginning to feel there were just so many times I could pick myself up. I'd started that summer by myself, but being alone hadn't bothered me. I'd completed something for once, and had two inches of gut-level writing to prove it. With the money I'd saved I had a car and an apartment looking out over the ocean, two tokens of independence. I still had a job.

But as the summer went on the charge of writing began to wear off, and hearing nothing from the agent made each week worse than the last.

Slowly and inevitably I let myself get dragged into the old dumb ritual scene with the boss and his favorite art director. I'd had a brief scene with the art director and the boss was jealous. The boss also had problems with his wife and thought a threbbie with me and the wife would help. I didn't agree, so he fired me. I'd just heard from the agent about not selling my book, and I stayed fairly stoned as emotional insulation. When my boss told me I couldn't come to the office high, I told him to fuck off, and he fired me.

L.A. was in the middle of a heat wave, which seemed to take away all my energy. I was beginning to lose curiosity in everything.

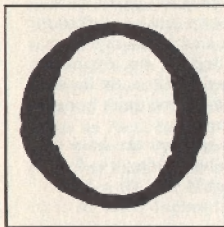
Then some new friends gave me a birthday party where I met a guy called Grover Lewis. He let it slip that he worked for *Rolling Stone*, and even asked me if he could read my book. I laughed and told him he must be putting me on, explaining about my experiences with citizen Wenner. But, no, he insisted, he was perfectly serious, he'd read it and tell me quite honestly whether he thought it was any good or not.

About four days later he called to say that the book was sold. I bought a bottle of Dom Perignon and invited the friends who had given my birthday party to share it.

At last, a new beginning!



12. All I ask is that you not understand me too quickly.



IN THE MONEY I GOT from the advance I flew to New York to see my sister Harrie.

I walked all the way from the midtown terminal to the Village where Harrie had a small apartment—three rooms wedged awkwardly into a tower on Fourteenth Street.

Harrie still had a layer of Thorazine fat, left over from her engagement with the psycho-therapists, but her eyes were like they were before all this had started. She opened the door wearing a T-shirt with *Art Boredom* written across it, above a plate of steaming dog-shit.

"It's the next movement," she said, off-hand, and grinned. Since she moved to the village she'd gone to underground films and poetry readings as much as she made the bars where Jimi Hendrix and his attendants hung out. She even thought of herself as an intellectual. Pretty good for someone who'd never read anything but *Catcher in the Rye* till she got out of college. I was happy to see her so self-assured.

That night we went to see *Women in Love*, holding hands during all the women's lib bits. Maybe we'd end up together as old sisters, I thought, laughing with each other about all the fuck-ups we'd caused.

When we got back to the apartment we sang together at the piano, stoned on some treated grass for which Harrie had paid thirty-five dollars. Harrie, when stoned, could do Leon Russell almost as well as he could do it himself.

We talked, for hours, both of us looking for a closeness that seemed just out of reach. Harrie still gave the impression that she felt she had to run to catch up with me, that she had to repeat every mistake that I made. I believed that she had this strange fear that everything she got I'd take away from her. Yet there was nothing I could do to rid her of it.

We'd been very close. We'd both done time in Roosevelt Hospital and we'd "blown our cool" with men who'd been important to us. We knew that only we could understand each other but that still wasn't any help, since neither of us had any final answers.

Now that I'd written it all out, I wanted to share whatever insights were there.

But I sensed her fear of my book. We didn't talk about it. I wished she could uncover *her* life to me.

Maybe I did the whole thing for her. To help free her.

She was so beautiful underneath the smudges.

Next morning I let Ruth talk me into lunch at Lincoln Center. I got there early and ran smack into Kevin, Tinker's brother. I told him he'd gotten a booze belly since I'd seen him. He told me, "Honey, I gotta booze everything."

Ruth came in, the same poised satin animal she'd always been. As she bubbled over with cabaret gossip and stories about her adopted daughter, I noticed how tightly she clung to the new signs of permanence in her life. She had escaped from the love-jungle with a husband and child. But her old terror was still intact. Maybe she had discovered the invisible walls in marriage. For now, I could lean back and rejoice at the fact I was free, self-sufficient, and not looking for escape.

Ruth asked me if she could fix me up with a date. I hesitated, then laughed and said, "Okay . . . I guess so."

Back at Harrie's later in the afternoon, Murray the Banker called. Ruth had given him my number. Was I doing anything in the evening? Could I meet him at Columbus Circle at seven?

I made up and pasted on eyelashes for the first time in years. Every stroke of supergloss made me feel more artificially flavored and colored. I just couldn't conjure up the old reckless Francie.

It was pouring rain that night. My first picture of Murray was an impossibly big umbrella with legs. Under the umbrella a frazzled blond head with George Segal's smile shining out. Murray had three fat star-spangled joints in his vest pocket. We smoked our way up Broadway to a restaurant stuffed with hungry film freaks.

The TV over the bar flashed the rock-death of Jimi Hendrix, and slowly the message hopped from bar to table, stirring up the sea of heads. Suddenly a guy at the bar pulled out a joint and lit up. "Let's smoke one for Jimi!" he shouted.

A lot of people laughed. Sometimes the New York crowd was stupid, but they were never dull.

After a drunken meal we walked back to Murray's place singing 40's movie tunes. We smoked our nightcaps on the balcony of his apartment and looked up at the rainy sky. I told him I thought the moon looked like something from a painting by Alfred Pinkham Ryder. Murray knew who I meant.

He took me into the bedroom and made a little speech I'd

gotten used to hearing: "I like you, I really think you're special, but I just came out of a long relationship. I can't get into anything heavy now, know what I mean? Besides, you live in California."

It didn't matter. For once I could accept a one-night thing for what it was. Except for my nineteen-year-old husband I'd always drawn enders, guys who'd just ended something, either being married or having an old lady. Maybe it was some kind of insurance, to make sure I *couldn't* get involved, though I'd never have believed that at the time.

In the morning we walked as far as Sixth Avenue and kissed goodbye like brother and sister. He even chucked my chin and said "Keep on truckin'."

I took a cab downtown and tried to figure out why I could never go back to being a New York broad. When I lived there I had turned on to every game and relished dressing up in all the costumes. There hadn't been a real Francie in those charades, even though the possible roles were unlimited.

I had tried to make it in the "real" world of advertising as a man-woman, struggling to get "thirty by thirty," only to run into my crazy lady boss and Harry the Rat.

I'm not sure anybody can keep his humanity and succeed in that game. Harry and the lady boss had both helped to put me in the funny farm. Even so, I'd rather be branded as a kook than play for keeps in the New York Success Club.

There *were* women who seemed to have the city under their thumbs. They were cold bitches wrapped in fox furs. They had more automatic accessories than a new Cadillac. They married malleable weaklings and let their hubbies squirm while they cruised the clubs. They were contemptible ballbusters, and yet I had a nagging suspicion that they grew up believing the same things I did: That a woman can't really be happy until she marries and has children. That women who move around are nothing but whores.

I'd gotten married too early to a boy with a man's body. By the time I was nineteen I'd had a miscarriage and a divorce. I was married happily for just long enough to know how good it can be when it's good. When it ended, there were too many interesting doors waiting to be opened.

I still hadn't opened them all. Settling down in the conventional way seemed unlikely now.

"Body Count" has many meanings. Journalists say it when they mean to say that many men have died. For me, the many men in my life were much more than just bodies. Each one had perceived me differently, and wanted some part of me. Even

so, I was the one who grew richer for having opened up to them. And they became part of a count only when they didn't bother to grow from the experience, or give of themselves.

In spite of whatever scars I'd acquired, I still felt love for them all. I was sure I'd love again.

I had spilled my guts' secrets on paper and I knew I was Francie Schwartz. Not a vending machine.

I didn't have to define myself by the men I'd loved. Even Paul McCartney had taken more than he'd given. I'd always been secretly glad to have been a catalyst in his life. He was afraid to let me get under his skin. In that he wasn't much different from the rest.

Men say I'm too intense. For most, I am. If women could ejaculate, I'd do it prematurely. Some think I'm crazy. But craziness never stopped them from asking me for love, sex, or reassurance.

No, I didn't have an answer to the question, "What next, Schwartz?"

Sure, I'd love to be the wife in the 40's movies with a white apron over her dress. But that doesn't happen much any more. And I don't want to marry just to become a professional consumer and housekeeper. Maybe that's why I haven't. Because too many men my age are still hanging on to that 40's thing too.

I knew I didn't want to be liberated from anything. The trouble is, there are hardly any boundaries any more.

Men are always going to be an inescapable part of my life, like eating. I wouldn't have it any other way.

But somewhere along the line, a change *had* taken place.

I had a sense of balance. A sense of belonging in the world, in my own special place, even if I was alone for the moment.

When I got back to Harrie's I could hear the piano thumping a Leon Russell song before I even got out of the cab.

Ruth had called to invite me to a very very exclusive party for high echelon freaks only. I called to thank her and decline gracefully.

I sat down at the piano with my sister and we wailed some blues together. I had more important things to think about than parties.



Epilogue: For Norman Mailer.

I

WROTE ABOUT MEN, thinking of him. Had we met there might have been a new fire in Manhattan. For I too was adventurer, actress, mystic, and proud of all my wounds.

I always thought his pages had balls, hair, a smell of New York's hungriest bars and most sumptuous penthouses. The secret stench of sexual fears was hidden in both.

"I know these people too, Norman," I thought.

Lying with their eyes while their hands are busy working overtime, as another friend might have put it . . .

Norman, you have been as mystified by the depth of *labia minora* as I have by the minds that so blindly follow the balls beneath them.

You have seen the angry eyes, demanding, "Am I a disconnected cunt to be fed and orgasmed regularly? A pink pet with arms and legs, a stereo connection with mortality for your entertainment?"

I've watched men walk through me, amused as if they were viewing an avant-garde exhibit at the Tate. Blundering with their hands, into my aura, they bruise themselves on the high-jumps of their own fears. Still, I am only a shadow on their consciousness. And there's a war on.

Is there really enough to die for in that arena? Will all men and women swallow the same bullshit paranoia, shoved blindly down their throats with the dope and the media and the pollution?

I offer a view of this woman's heaven and hell, which abide in the city of Los Angeles, and then and again the bitch city, the palace of whores and giants and machinemade dreams . . . the city of New York.





Editorial/Production: Mick Stevens, Katy Wolff,
Vickie Jackson, Carol Raskin, Douglas Mount.

Sister: Barbara Burgower

Design: Jon Goodchild

Abacus: Alan

Rinzler